

CATHOLICS IN THE MODERN SOUTH
THE TRANSFORMATION OF A RELIGION AND A REGION, 1945-1975

By

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To Mom and Dad

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This dissertation explores the intersection of religion, race, and regional identity in order to reveal the relationship between the South's Protestant culture and Catholics in Alabama and Georgia. As a distinctive religious minority, Catholics feared that they lived under constant public scrutiny, and they carefully negotiated the boundaries separating their religious subculture and society at large. In an effort to connect a disparate population behind a shared Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century, Church leaders expanded diocesan infrastructures and increased their institutional presence in the region. But this Romanization of their religious subculture was often in conflict with the South's racial status quo. This dissertation argues that for most white Catholics race was the central component of their southern identity. But tensions surrounding racial reform also brought into sharp relief internal conflicts between liberal and conservative, leadership and laity, and even between priest and prelate.

Catholics' awareness of their position in southern society concerned both civil rights and anti-civil rights advocates. Those opposed to an immediate end to segregation--the majority of whites--worried that moving too far ahead of the rest of secular society would further alienate Catholics and bring retribution against the Church. But proponents of racial justice also had misgivings about the Church's image when faced with the black freedom struggle. The few white Catholic activists in the South believed that the Church abdicated its moral authority by not taking the initiative in opposing segregation. They wanted the Church to engage secular society and provide the spiritual leadership missing from Protestant denominations. Until the 1960s, mainstream white society effectively marginalized those activists. But segregation became a moral issue for the Catholic Church before it did for most of the region's Protestants. And a bishop's authority to act unilaterally in the cause of racial reform made the Church's public presence in Alabama and Georgia distinct from the Protestant majority. By the early 1970s, progressive bishops led the Church into liberal territory, advocating racial and social justice causes that were uncharacteristic of the white South.

INTRODUCTION

"TO BE GOOD CATHOLICS AND GOOD CITIZENS"

In 1945 a story in *The Catholic Week*, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Mobile, acknowledged that Catholics were "scarce in most sections of the South." And where Catholics maintained a public presence "they know they have to be good Catholics and good citizens if they want to attain the respect of their fellow-citizens. And the majority of them do."¹ The tension between being good Catholics and good citizens had plagued the American Church since the colonial period. Despite political battles over public schools and public support for parochial schools, Catholics accepted American notions of religious pluralism and adapted to their secular environment.² Too much adaptation and too many (it appeared to Rome) relatively assimilated American Catholics, however, led to the papal condemnation of "Americanism" in 1899. But Catholics in the twentieth century continued to negotiate the boundaries between their ethnic communities and secular society, often adapting American culture onto distinct

¹ "Trail Blazers In Birmingham," *The Catholic Week*, August 24, 1945, p. 7.

² See, for example, Joseph P. Chinnici, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism, 1775 – 1820," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16 (Fall 1979): 727–746; Joseph J. McCadden, "Bishop Hughes Versus the Public School Society of New York," *Catholic Historical Review* (1964): 188–207; Joseph Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings: Catholic – Protestant Relations During the Episcopacy of John Carroll," *Church History* 45 (1976): 358–373; Michael D. Clark, "Jonathan Boucher and the Toleration of Roman Catholics in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71 (1976): 194–203; Patrick W. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

Catholic traditions and rituals.³ Catholics in Alabama and Georgia made their own accommodations to secular society, often self-consciously and with a keen awareness of their marginality. Southern white Catholics' efforts to be good citizens required acquiescence to--if not support for--the region's racial status quo. From the perspective of white southerners of whatever faith, the maintenance of social stability following the end of World War II required segregation and the exclusion of blacks from public life. The centrality of race governed issues as varied as educational policy, housing and road construction, business opportunities, and the availability of hospital care.⁴ Few white laity challenged this social arrangement and, indeed, most embraced it.

This dissertation explores the intersection of religion, race, and regional identity in order to reveal the relationship between Alabama and Georgia Catholics and twentieth-century secular southern society. Although it is virtually impossible to speak of one singular southern culture, Alabama and Georgia are representative of the elements that defined southern identity for most of the twentieth century. The late journalist cum southern critic W. J. Cash once noted that if there are many Souths there is also one South. For most of the twentieth century, that one South was preoccupied with race and preserving white supremacy and segregation. Following the end of World War II, concerns over race silenced southern liberals who had earlier supported the New

³ On the Americanist controversy, see R. Scott Appleby, *Church and Age Unite! The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism, 1895-1910* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Alfred Juan Ede, *The Lay Crusade for a Christian America: A Study of the American Federation of Catholic Societies, 1900-1919* (New York: Garland, 1988); Robert Emmett Curran, "Prelude to 'Americanism': The New York Accademia and Clerical Radicalism in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Church History* 47 (1978): 48-65. On the adaptation of American culture to Catholicism, see Jay P. Dolan, "The Search for an American Catholicism," *Catholic Historical Review* 82 (April 1996): 169-186.

⁴ On southern race relations, see David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

Deal and were sympathetic to labor unions. President Harry Truman's modest civil rights program alienated white southerners and gave rise to the States' Rights Democratic party--the Dixiecrats--in 1948.⁵ In an environment that recognized and enforced (sometimes violently) strict racial boundaries separating black from white, the ethnic differences that were traditionally associated with American Catholicism were muted.

Ethnic identity persisted into the twentieth century in a few southern states, most notably among Latino Catholics in Texas and Florida. Including the Hispanic population in a study of southern Catholics would have introduced a unique dynamic into the picture of southern identity. In Texas, for example, the Catholic population included a sizable proportion of Mexican Americans, who fit in neither of the South's "typical" racial categories. They were neither white nor black. For Mexican immigrants, Catholicism played a central role in their ethnic and religious identity, even when the institutional Church was often marginal to their everyday experience. Mexican nationalism persisted among Mexican Americans well into the twentieth century. Indeed, priests often appealed to nationalist sentiments in order to strengthen community and spirituality among parishioners.⁶ And Mexicans suffered discrimination at the hands of Anglos, much like that suffered by blacks. For Mexican Americans, religious and ethnic identities overshadowed any affinity they might have

⁵ See Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945 - 1980* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), pp. 38-73.

⁶ Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Mexican-American Faith Communities in Texas and the Southwest," in Jay P. Dolan and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church, 1900-1963* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 92. See also Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., eds., *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

felt toward white southern society. The Texas southern Catholic story, therefore, would be different than that of Alabama and Georgia. This dissertation, therefore, concentrates on the racial dynamic between whites and blacks in southern society and within the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia, which was composed primarily of Americans of European and African descent.

Available secondary literature suggests that Catholics in Alabama and Georgia evinced typical responses to the southern racial status quo. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, southern convention forced the Church to make Jim Crow accommodations and maintain separate facilities for white and black Catholics. Segregation characterized the Church in the South, and that *modus vivendi* satisfied many white churchpeople.⁷ Indeed, the Archbishop of New Orleans, Joseph Rummel, whose archdiocese in 1960 had six times the Catholic population of the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham, met fierce lay resistance when he announced the impending integration of parochial schools in 1955. The New Orleans Association of Catholic Laymen opposed Rummel's decision, and in 1962 the archbishop excommunicated three laymen who persisted in their hateful opposition to school integration.⁸

⁷ On Catholic support for slavery, the Confederacy, and later segregation see Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983); Michael V. Gannon, *Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1964); Dolores Egger Labbe, *Jim Crow Comes to Church* (New York: Arno Press, 1978); William A. Osborne, *The Segregated Covenant: Race Relations and American Catholics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

⁸ Michael B. Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antirace Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 39-44; Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), pp. 171-178, 199-204, 324.

Despite some southern white Catholics' reluctance to acknowledge the relationship between Catholic social doctrine and the racial status quo, however, segregation became a moral issue for their Church before it did for most of the region's Protestants. The Church's pre-Vatican II belief that salvation could come only through Rome forced southern dioceses to evangelize African Americans and include them in the Church's public presence. White Protestants, therefore, were always suspicious of the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia, and white Catholics there lived under constant public scrutiny. This did not mean that most white Catholics readily accepted the inevitability of desegregation. In fact, many resisted and relied on the church hierarchy and conservative priests and bishops to sustain the regional social order. But the Catholic ethos contained within it the ingredients for both a firm commitment to orthodoxy that sustained the social status quo as well as a liberal challenge to the same status quo. The Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham represented the conservative protector of a segregated, hierarchical society, while Catholic leaders in the Archdiocese of Atlanta (previously the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta) served as liberal challengers.⁹

The secular society in which Catholics in Alabama and Georgia lived was intimately associated with the region's religious milieu. Historian J. Wayne Flynt once observed that studying the South without addressing religion is like exploring modern

⁹ The dioceses in Alabama and Georgia grew and divided during the years covered by this study. In 1945 the Diocese of Mobile and the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta covered all of their respective states. In 1956 the Church created the Diocese of Savannah and the Diocese of Atlanta out of the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta. In 1962 Atlanta was elevated to an archdiocese. The Diocese of Mobile became the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham in 1954, which included portions of west Florida until 1968. In 1969 the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham separated into two separate dioceses. Although the Diocese of Mobile was not an archdiocese until 1980, its prelate, Thomas J. Toolen, was given the title "Archbishop *ad Personam*" by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Therefore, he is referred to throughout most of the dissertation as Archbishop Toolen.

American culture without reference to sex. One can do it, but such an approach misses the larger picture.¹⁰ By religion, of course, Flynt and others have traditionally meant Protestant evangelicalism. Indeed, following the work of Samuel S. Hill, the seemingly symbiotic relationship between Protestantism and secular southern society has become axiomatic among historians of the South.¹¹ Even where historians have noted diversity within the region, many have agreed, in the words of David Edwin Harrell, that Catholics, Jews, and marginal sects shared southern religion's "remarkable capacity to bend to social pressure--accommodating slavery and segregation, lionizing the Lost Cause, and heralding southern spiritual superiority."¹²

Writing with the theological insight of a southern churchman and historian, Hill argued that the conservative Protestant emphasis on a spiritual crisis conversion made an individual's relationship to God paramount. This "central theme" of southern Protestantism precluded the development of a Christian social ethic that could address the South's racial crisis. Hill's conclusions made sense to many observers, and his argument continues to frame historiographical debate. But until recently historians treated all southern religion as a Protestant monolith, characterized by theological uniformity. They underestimated the diversity within southern Protestantism and--with

¹⁰ J. Wayne Flynt, "Southern Protestantism and Reform, 1890-1920," in Samuel S. Hill, Jr., ed., *Varieties of Southern Religious Experience* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 135.

¹¹ Samuel S. Hill Jr., *Southern Churches in Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968; originally published, 1966). Hill's classic has been re-issued with a new introduction and reflection on the state of the field some thirty years later as, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999). See also, Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "The South's Two Cultures," in Hill, ed., *Religion and the Solid South* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972); Barry Hankins, "Southern Baptists and Northern Evangelicals: Cultural Factors and the Nature of Religious Alliances," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 7 (Summer 1997): 271-298.

¹² David Edwin Harrell, "Religious Pluralism: Catholics, Jews, and Sectarians," in Charles R. Wilson, ed., *Religion in the South* (University, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1985).

Hill--miscalculated the persistence and ingenuity of those churchpeople who transcended the limits of their religious culture to engage actively the social crises that haunted the region. Theology mattered and often dictated how southerners adapted to southern society. But the theological implications of applied Christian faith varied across the Protestant spectrum. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, there were those southern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians who practiced a social gospel. And later in the twentieth century a minority of southern Protestant churchpeople supported interracialism.¹³

Catholics in Alabama and Georgia lived in a religious world that was foreign to most southern Protestants. Catholics were a minority in the South and claimed membership in a denomination centered elsewhere. From the perspective of a southern Protestant, Catholic loyalties lay outside the region--in Rome or at least in the North, where Catholics constituted a larger percentage of the population. Their theology, style of worship, Latin mass, devotions to saints, church structure, and ecclesiastical authority, moreover, all separated Catholics from the majority of southerners. At least on the surface, the Catholic Church at mid-century had changed little since the

¹³ For a challenge to the cultural captivity thesis, see Beth Barton Schweiger, "The Captivity of Southern Religious History," unpublished paper presented to Southern Intellectual History Circle, Birmingham, AL, February 21, 1997; idem, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Hill, "Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited," in idem, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, pp. xvi. On the existence of a southern social gospel, see J. Wayne Flynt, "Southern Protestantism and Reform, 1890-1920"; idem, "Dissent in Zion: Alabama Baptists and Social Issues, 1900-1914," *Journal of Southern History* 25 (November 1969): 523-542; idem, "Organized Labor, Reform, and Alabama Politics, 1920," *Alabama Review* 23 (July 1970): 163-180; idem, "Alabama White Protestantism and Labor, 1900-1914," *Alabama Review* 25 (July 1972): 192-217; idem, "Religion in the Urban South: The Divided Religious Mind of Birmingham, 1900-1919," *Alabama Review* 30 (April 1977): 108-134. For later in the twentieth century, see Tracy Elaine K'Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1997).

nineteenth century. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Rome centralized its authority and spelled out the proper hierarchy of church leadership--bishops at the top, followed by priests and laity. Pope Pius X claimed that the "Church is essentially an unequal society . . . comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock." The emphasis on the authority of priests and bishops was intended to teach the laity to be obedient to religious leaders.¹⁴

The clergy controlled access to the sacraments, which enhanced their authority in a layperson's life. Priests celebrated mass in Latin, a foreign language not accessible to all. It was primarily through the clergy's actions, then, that lay Catholics gained access to the sacred. The hierarchical nature of pre-Vatican II Catholicism and the importance of ritual ordered a Catholic's life, and the sacraments touched every milestone and significant event for the Church's communicants. From birth to death, rituals of baptism, confession, penance, communion, and marriage connected Catholics to each other and to a larger sacred world. American Catholics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, moreover, took a hostile stance against secular society. According to Jay Dolan, a spirit of anti-Protestantism accompanied this aversion to society. Catholics feared and mistrusted Protestants and avoided interfaith contact whenever possible.¹⁵

¹⁴ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 221–225; Pius X quoted on p. 222.

¹⁵ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, pp. 221–240; Jay P. Dolan, "Catholic Attitudes Toward Protestants," in *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America*, eds. Robert N. Bellah and Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: Crossroad, 1987). Also see Jon W. Anderson and Gwen Kennedy Neville, "More Varieties of Religious Experience: Time and Faith for Southern Catholics," in *Religion in the Contemporary South: Diversity, Community, and Identity*, eds. O. Kendall White, Jr., and Daryl White (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995); and Jon W. Anderson, "Catholic Imagination

In addition, Catholics perceive the sacred with what David Tracy called an "analogical imagination." That is to say, Catholics experience God as ever present in the world, a notion that perceives society as basically good and is therefore conducive to an emphasis on communal values.¹⁶ Ostensibly, therefore, Catholic incarnational theology differed fundamentally from southern Protestantism. Hill noted that for a southern Protestant, morality "is associated with *being*, rather than doing."¹⁷ Catholicism, in contrast, emphasizes the doing, rather than the being. Catholic doctrine, then, lent itself more easily to the development of a social ethic that encouraged its adherents to engage secular society.¹⁸

Just because there was a nascent social ethic, however, did not necessarily mean that all Catholics pursued it. The size of their population in Alabama and Georgia left them vulnerable to their minority status and unable--and, perhaps, unwilling--to engage society as their theology might otherwise compel them to do. Nineteenth-century devotional Catholicism fostered a sense of individualism that, in fact, made the southern Catholic accommodation to secular society relatively easy. Catholics in Alabama and Georgia emerged from their religious world to critique secular society and engage their critics, but then escaped to their sacred realm. Only gradually did a minority adopt the

and Inflections of 'Church' in the Contemporary South," in *The Culture of Bible Belt Catholics*, eds. Jon W. Anderson and William B. Friend (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

¹⁶ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (New York: Collier, 1990), pp. 44-47.

¹⁷ Hill, "The South's Two Cultures," p. 35.

¹⁸ On a Catholic social doctrine, see David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

Church's social ethic and moral opposition to racism and segregation. As the Second Vatican Council transformed Catholicism itself in the 1960s, only then did racial reform become expected for the Church at large. This gradually placed the Church in an awkward position vis-à-vis southern society--either accept the immorality of racism and segregation or deny the Church's moral authority to influence the secular world.

Catholics in Alabama and Georgia shared the religious imagination and theology of the Roman Church; but they also differed from Catholics elsewhere. The southern Church lacked the strong ethnic presence and national identities that characterized--and sometimes plagued--the Church in the North and Midwest. The indigenous population of the Church in Alabama and Georgia included Irish and Italian immigrants. Hibernian Societies and the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, for example, celebrated St. Patrick's Day and Sons of Italy groups honored Columbus every year. But in missionary dioceses located in the South's racially polarized society, ethnic Europeans became "white."¹⁹ In the North, the parish--with its church, parochial school, convent, rectory, and gymnasiums--often was the center of immigrants' religious identity.²⁰ In the South, a parish usually comprised more than one neighborhood--indeed, often more than one county in rural areas. So Alabama and Georgia lacked the urban North's starting point,

¹⁹ On the process by which ethnic Europeans became "white," see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), especially Chapter 2. On the South's ethnic diversity, see Michael McNally, "A Peculiar Institution: A History of Catholic Parish Life in the Southeast (1850-1980)," and Charles E. Nolan, "Modest and Humble Crosses: A History of Catholic Parishes in the South Central Region (1850-1984)," both in *The American Catholic Parish: A History from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. 1, ed. Jay P. Dolan (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 177-181, 238, 243; Dennis Clark, "The South's Irish Catholics: A Case of Cultural Confinement," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, eds. Miller and Wakelyn; Fussell Chalker, "Irish Catholics and the Building of the Ocmulgee and Flint Railroad," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 54 (1970): 507-16.

²⁰ McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, pp. 13-28.

namely, the parish that was strong enough to shape identity. Rather than identify closely with parish and local institutions, therefore, southern Catholics identified with the Church universal.

According to John T. McGreevy the strength of the parish and the importance of community boundaries dictated how northern urban white Catholics encountered the migration of African Americans into formerly all-white neighborhoods. As blacks relocated into those neighborhoods, white Catholics perceived them to be violating sacred space. Northern Catholics, then, viewed race relations through the prism of the parish. White lay Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, in contrast, encountered African Americans as white southerners. For them, their faith--like that of Protestants--legitimated secular society. Like the doctrines of Catholicism, racial segregation carried the sanction of time-honored tradition. When Church leaders--emboldened by changes within the Church--accepted the moral imperatives of the civil rights movement, then, many white laypeople failed to appreciate why something that had long been accepted was suddenly sinful.²¹

McGreevy took seriously the intersection of race, religion, and community. But other historians have often handled the role of religion in the civil rights movement lightly, apparently not comfortable with the implications of a truly activist faith. The role of the African-American church has been mentioned, to be sure, since the local black Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal congregation most often was the only institution with the facilities and leadership totally independent of white influence. Civil rights activists held their meetings in black churches, and ministers often served as

²¹ See *ibid.*

leaders of the local movement. But faith itself has not been made central, especially within the white church.²² White Christians' response to the civil rights movement was complicated. Both opposition to the black freedom struggle and support for it were shaped by Christian faith. This was particularly true for Catholics, for whom authority and certain orthodoxy were as important as doctrines of racial and social justice.

When historians do point to the white use of religion in the anti-civil rights movement, they usually argue that such claims to divine sanction were mere covers for a sinister racism divorced from true belief. But theologian Charles Marsh has asked his readers "to consider how the movement may appear anew if its complex and often

²² Historians debate when the modern civil rights movement actually began. Of course, the period between the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been considered the pinnacle of the post-World War II movement. Scholars initially focused on this ten-year period because of the prominence of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and the movement's legal and political victories, which threatened to undermine southern segregation. Other historians have noted the significance of World War II and the ways that conflict emboldened African Americans in their struggle for equality. In the late 1970s and 1980s, focus shifted from national organizations and leaders to communities. These studies revealed broad patterns and the importance of local organizations on the success of the movement. Historians have examined the movement in much broader context, viewing it in terms of its early-twentieth-century origins. See Stephen F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review* 96 (April 1991): 456-471; Adam Fairclough, "State of the Art: Historians and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American Studies* 24 (December 1990): 387-398. For conflicting accounts of the New Deal as the origins of the movement, see Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue, Volume I: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). For local studies of the civil rights movement, see William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement. Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984). Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* is the best study of the civil rights movement within a broader chronological context. Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) examines the tension between local and national organizations and the class divisions within the movement itself. Finally, Timothy J. Minchin has broadened the chronological context of the movement in the other direction, arguing that the 1964 Civil Rights Act was not the culmination of the legal aspect of the movement; instead, he argues, it merely marked the beginning of a long and arduous legal battle. See Minchin, "Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry," *Journal of Southern History* 65 (November 1999): 809-844; and idem, *Hiring the Black Worker: The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

cacophonous religious convictions are taken seriously--if the content of such language is not dismissed as smooth justifications of cruelty or dissent, pragmatic tools in the service of political ends, or opiates of the status quo."²³ Marsh lays the groundwork for recasting the struggle for racial justice into a theological drama, a spiritual contest with serious moral and religious consequences. The story of the Catholic Church in the civil rights movement is one of the Church in theological transition. On the one hand, ecclesiastical authority rooted in a pre-Vatican II hierarchy acquiesced to the southern social order and refused to challenge segregation. On the other hand, the modern Church was forced to sort out the moral implications of a relatively newfound social ethic that undermined racial discrimination. Although the nature of bishops' authority became increasingly complicated in the late 1960s, their ability to act unilaterally set Catholics apart from Protestant churches.

Reconsidering the black freedom struggle as a theological drama helps to emphasize the interracial nature of the movement. The success of the civil rights movement depended in part on the actions of whites. Hostile whites provided violent images and negative publicity that created national sympathy for an end to racial segregation. But the fight for racial justice also needed moderate and liberal whites to bridge the racial gap and create a biracial coalition.²⁴ The fight for racial justice did not

²³ Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 3. In addition, James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet* are splendid exceptions to the lack of information on white Christians in the civil rights movement.

²⁴ See for example, David L. Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Charles W. Eagles, *Outside Agitator: Jon Daniels and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); K'Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of*

necessarily split southern whites into advocates and opponents of reform. It also created a third, middle camp that was often pulled back and forth between conscience and political expedience. This group consisted of those who knew the morally and ethically correct thing to do, but who had difficulty putting the knowledge into practice. Many white Catholics in Alabama and Georgia lived on this middle ground. Their church taught them how to love their fellow Catholics, and whites and blacks participated in church activities together--often in segregated arrangements, but together nevertheless. The American bishops denounced racism and segregation in 1958. And in 1963 Pope John XXIII issued his own condemnation.²⁵ Yet, because of their relationship to southern society, they resisted the full implications of Catholic racial justice doctrine.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation introduces the growth patterns of the dioceses in Alabama and Georgia and demonstrates that Alabama and Georgia were missionary territory for Catholics. The growth of the southern Catholic Church resulted from a combination of homegrown initiative and outside contribution of money and manpower. This outside assistance ran counter to southern rhetoric about local autonomy, but it was a fact of southern life. The chapters that follow break down into roughly two chronological sections--from 1945 until approximately 1960, and from 1960 until the 1970s. Chapters 2 through 4 cover approximately the same time period, from 1945

Koinonia Farm; Andrew S. Chancey, "Race, Religion, and Reform: Koinonia's Challenge to Southern Society, 1942 - 1992" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, Gainesville, 1998).

²⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, in Claudia Carlen, I.H.M., ed., *The Papal Encyclicals, 1958 - 1981* ([Wilmington, NC], McGrath, 1981).

through the 1950s. Religious differences separated Catholics and Protestants, and anti-Catholicism served as an identity-marker for both Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Church leaders in both Alabama and Georgia undertook expansion efforts that would strengthen local parishes and unite their Catholic populations behind a shared Roman Catholicism. When Alabama Catholics made their case for acceptance into the public sphere, they appealed to themes of patriotism and liberty. Through Christ the King celebrations and public veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, southern white Catholics reinforced their own American identity, even as their prominence in southern society rose. Their claims on public sacred space also revealed the relationship between their own religious culture and mainstream southern society. The boundary separating the two became increasingly fluid. In arguments similar to those of white Protestants in the late 1940s and 1950s, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia envisioned a national society that would closely resemble that of the South.²⁶ By mid-century, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia had begun to redefine themselves as Catholics, southerners, and Americans. The boundaries separating these identities became more fluid.

Nevertheless, race was the central component of their southern identity. Many white Catholic laymen and women, not to mention their leadership, proved to be as racist as any white Protestant. Still, because of the inclusive nature of Catholicism, southern Church leaders fashioned a subculture that included African Americans, even if only marginally. Members of religious orders and others who might be considered “outsiders” from southern society took the lead. Gradually over the course of the

²⁶ On this and the differences between white and black Baptists, see Andrew Michael Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Black and White Baptists and Civil Rights, 1947–1957* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

decade and a half after the end of the war, Catholic leaders accepted segregation as a moral issue. Following Church social teaching, a select number of bishops and priests addressed racial issues and urged racial equality within the Church at least, if not in society at large. Priests and nuns of religious orders based outside the South espoused these ideas earlier than other Catholics in the region, but their influence was limited to the African Americans with whom they worked.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 address the concurrent changes in both the South and the Catholic Church during the 1960s and early 1970s. In the early 1960s, the civil rights movement converged with the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII to re-evaluate the Church's relationship to the modern world. The Council de-emphasized the hierarchical structure of the Church and replaced it with an understanding of the Church as the "people of God." This conciliar definition encouraged increased lay, religious, and priestly involvement both in the Church and in addressing social justice problems. Clergy and female religious were among the first Catholics to apply conciliar doctrines to racial reform. In 1965 both priests and nuns assumed prominent positions in the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights demonstrations, much to the consternation of conservative Catholics, including Archbishop Thomas J. Toolen of the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham. In the 1960s the Archdiocese of Atlanta was more liturgically and racially progressive. Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan actively pursued liturgical reform and used his episcopal authority to integrate archdiocesan institutions. The Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham, in contrast, instituted liturgical reforms more slowly and responded to the civil rights movement with caution, if not outright reaction.

By the 1970s, being “good Catholics” and “good citizens” had become more complicated for Alabama and Georgia Catholics. Post-World War II events had transformed their denomination and their social milieu. For Catholics, the Vatican Council and the civil rights movement had broadened understandings of the Church and created new opportunities for ecumenical cooperation between southern Protestants and Catholics. But the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia defies facile categorization. By the early 1970s, progressive bishops led the Church into liberal territory, advocating racial and social justice causes that were uncharacteristic of the white South. They joined the Catholic mainstream with their support for fair housing and workers’ rights, but the relationship between the laity and hierarchy suggested a more conservative Church at odds with progressive leadership.

CHAPTER 1
MISSION TO THE BIBLE BELT:
GROWTH PATTERNS OF THE DIOCESES IN ALABAMA AND GEORGIA

"In the year 1944," Father John Horgan, the Mobile diocese's director of missions to south Alabama, wrote in 1948, "a traveler leaving . . . Mobile and going North on highway 31 would drive for hours through what is locally known as the Bible Belt of Alabama. . . . Here in this vast area of over 3000 square miles not one Catholic Church could be found. Our traveler might wonder if there were any Catholics in these places." There were many, Horgan answered, but they lacked a local parish church. They were "braving the continued storms of ignorance and bigotry--without any of the consolations of our Holy Faith." Writing only four years later, Horgan concluded that conditions had improved. A journey through the small towns along the same route in 1948 would reveal several Catholic mission stations. They served the small Catholic population in that area as "a real house of God."¹ Horgan's hypothetical traveler just as easily could have traversed rural Georgia instead of south Alabama to discover identical situations. Not surprisingly, the area contained few signs of the presence of Catholics. Elsewhere, particularly in the North and Midwest, by the end of World War II Catholics constituted a majority of the population and had achieved a significant level of social

¹ The Rev. John Horgan, "Catholic Missions of 'The Bible Belt,'" *The Catholic Week*, July 9, 1948, p. 1.

maturity and stability. But in the South, they remained an overwhelming minority, at most no more than 3 percent of the population. In Alabama, Catholic numbers were strongest in Mobile and Birmingham. Mobile's Catholic population dates back to the colonial period, and Birmingham traces its Catholic roots to Italian and Irish laborers in the nineteenth century. In Georgia Savannah has the oldest Catholic tradition, with Atlanta's Catholic population developing after the end of World War II.

Since the Catholic Church in the South (outside Louisiana) lacked a prominent indigenous population, post-World War II growth set it apart from those Protestant denominations--such as the Baptists and Methodists--whose strength was regional. The growth of the Church in Alabama and Georgia depended on outside agents that reminded southern Catholics of their marginal status in the region and their relationship to the larger denomination. Financial assistance for parish construction and liturgical accoutrements often came from mission organizations based in northern dioceses. Southern Catholics also engaged in organized evangelization. Those duties often fell to religious orders, like the Paulists, who specialized in parish missions or open-air evangelism. Finally, the growth of Church in Alabama and Georgia can be attributed to in-migration of non-southern Catholics following the end of World War II.

In the North and Midwest, the urban parish served as the cornerstone of a strong Catholic identity. For those Catholics, the parish identified the neighborhood in which they lived and demarcated the sacred boundaries that gave their environment religious meaning.² Mobile, Birmingham, and Savannah, with larger Catholic populations, had

² McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*.

more parishes and most closely resembled the situation in the North. But even then, parish was not always coterminous with neighborhood. One parish usually drew communicants from several locales. In the rest of the South, however, the Catholic population was too small and dispersed, and churches built only after the population reached a certain size, for the parish to be a strong symbol of unity for these Catholics. To be sure, the parish was important. For people with no visible symbol of their faith, a new church building was inspiring. As Horgan pointed out, even the smallest mission station could be seen as the "real house of God." But many counties and towns still lacked a full-fledged parish or a full-time pastor. Many areas built parishes at a time when Church authorities were engaged in concerted efforts to centralize their authority. As a result, church buildings often did little more than connect parishioners to diocesan and--by extension--Roman authority.

Following the expedition of Hernando de Soto from Florida north and westward, priests of the Society of Jesus entered Alabama and Georgia as early as the sixteenth century. The Jesuits sought converts among Native Americans, but, as it turned out, any lasting religious influence they had on the American Indians was inconsequential. Eventually European Catholics made their way into the region, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries priests traversed the South searching for the Catholic families who had moved ahead of their Church. Priests from several different religious orders, as well as diocesan priests, celebrated mass in homes, in rented auditoriums, and even in the church buildings of other denominations. For those Catholics not living in Mobile, Savannah, Birmingham, or Atlanta, the services of the Church were not readily

available. Mass was offered whenever a priest was in the area; baptisms and confirmations were irregular and again dependent on the erratic schedule of the overextended clergy. For well into the twentieth century, those priests were “outsiders,” members of religious orders based outside the region, or secular priests who most likely called Ireland or another European country home.

Catholic inhabitants had long lived in the Mobile and Savannah areas. Their ancestors had arrived during colonial contact, and they predated the Baptists and Methodists who came to predominate during the antebellum era. Italian migrants moved into the Birmingham area in the nineteenth century, as they found work in mines and on the railroads that would later help transform the South. The Irish arrived in middle Georgia for similar reasons. In addition, the ethnicity of the clergy in Alabama and Georgia followed the national pattern. Many, if not most, were Irish. Indeed, Bishop Toolen, of Irish ancestry himself, took annual recruiting trips to Ireland, coaxing young priests and nuns to his state. The presence of these various ethnic groups of Catholics in Alabama and Georgia reached as far back as the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Other Catholic folk migrated to the South during and following World War II, participating in the dramatic modernization of the postwar South. These Catholics settled in Atlanta, Huntsville, and Montgomery, and swelled the ranks of the already existing Catholics in Mobile and Birmingham.³

³ Oscar H. Lipscomb, “The Administration of John Quinlan, Second Bishop of Mobile, 1859-1883,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 78 (1967): 3-163; idem, “The Administration of Michael Portier, Vicar Apostolic of Alabama and the Floridas, 1825-1829, and First Bishop of Mobile, 1829-1859” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1963); Fussell Chalker, “Irish Catholics and the Building of the Ocmulgee and Flint Railroad”; Frank J. Fede,

For most of the twentieth century, the Church considered Alabama and Georgia to be missionary territories. The Catholic population encompassed such a small percentage of the total population that they required special assistance from mission organizations and northern dioceses. Many parishes in both dioceses were not self-supporting. Priests and bishops were forced to appeal to the Catholic Church Extension Society of Chicago and other groups with headquarters outside the South. Mission priests often took annual fund-raising trips through northern dioceses, and individual nonsouthern parishes contributed portions of their mission budgets to Alabama and Georgia. Such outside help demonstrates one characteristic these Catholics shared with their fellow white southerners, who despised--at least rhetorically--outside interference in their regional affairs. Of course, since at least the late nineteenth century, the region depended on northern and federal dollars for investment and development in the region. Indeed, New South development occurred in the late nineteenth century because of northern capital. After World War II, federal funds prompted the expansion of the modern South. For Catholics, such outside assistance provided them with the resources to build and supply mission chapels and new parishes across Alabama and Georgia. It also reinforced their relationship to extra-regional organizations and the influence of outside religious forces.

St. Vincent de Paul Church in Tallassee, Alabama, provides an almost comical study of contrasts between the strength and numbers of non-southern agents and the small, isolated churches they helped build. In circumstances that are unclear from the

available sources, Bishop Fulton Sheen, the nation's most famous and widely respected Catholic in the 1950s, had helped to convert Mrs. Robert Blount of Tallassee. Sheen was then on the faculty of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and promised her that he would preach the dedication sermon if a Catholic Church were built in her hometown. Mass was first offered in the area in 1910, but not until February 1956 did the small Alabama town, located approximately midway between Auburn and Montgomery, have the opportunity to invite Sheen to fulfill his promise. And, one newspaper reported, "with Bishop Sheen on the morrow will converge on Tallassee the most distinguished array of clergy ever to assemble in these parts." In addition to Sheen, the archbishop of Chicago, the Most Reverend William D. O'Brien, blessed the new building with holy water.

St. Vincent de Paul Church--"the realization of a dream by a good woman, the hard work of a few faithful families and the generosity of a non-Catholic husband"--had eight families and sixteen members in a mission church that would hold a mere 100 persons. The size of the parish notwithstanding, more than two thousand were expected to turn out to see and hear the host of the popular television show, "Life Is Worth Living," and organizers made arrangements to accommodate the overflow crowd at the National Guard Armory. Sheen's celebrity certainly was a factor in the turnout, and no other mission dedication drew such a crowd. But such a spectacle reveals how active Catholic missionary organizations were in the South, and how proud they were upon finding, symbolically, the one lost sheep that had strayed from the ninety-nine.⁴

⁴ "Bishop Sheen Keeps Pledge at Tallassee Church," *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 12, 1956; "Bishop Sheen Delivers Church Dedication Talk," *Alabama Journal*, February 13, 1956; see also articles in

In such an environment, most Catholics were not afforded the luxury of a well-provisioned parish. Baptisms, confirmations, and other rites of religious passage occurred in the parish church, but often those took place irregularly, as priests were stretched thinly across the diocese and their services not always readily available. There were exceptions, to be sure. Mobile's parish and neighborhood structures most closely resembled those in the urban North, although even then a parish covered a larger territory. And Savannah itself had six established parishes and five missions and chapels in 1945. But the rest of the state of Alabama and Georgia remained mission territory.⁵

Despite their mission status, during the postwar period Bishop Thomas J. Toolen had extraordinary plans for his diocese. In the spirit of the times, Toolen was an active "bricks and mortar" bishop who arrived in Mobile in 1927. One brief history of the bishop (later archbishop) says that Toolen "set as his goal to strengthen and unite the Catholic Church by instilling in his people a greater self-respect as Catholics."⁶ Toolen's 1945 plans had that goal clearly in mind. He announced programs to spend in excess of \$4 million to build or renovate churches, schools, hospitals, convents, and orphanages. The main holdup was the lack of building supplies, which had been

Tallahassee Tribune, February 9, 1956; and *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 13, 1956. Clippings in Public Information Subject Files—County, Container SG6855, Elmore County, Folder 10 Catholic Church, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

⁵ See McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, for an excellent discussion of the parish as a sacred self-contained environment for northern Catholics.

⁶ Souvenir Edition, *The Catholic Week*, November 23, 1979, p. 9.

reserved for the war effort.⁷ This was a tall order for a state with between a third and a half of its counties without a Catholic Church. Catholics were concentrated in Mobile and Birmingham. Thus, along with the plans for expansion of existing facilities, the Alabama diocese also increased efforts to evangelize the non-Catholic population, especially in rural areas around Birmingham but also in the vast stretches of former plantation land of central and south Alabama.

Bishop Toolen arrived in Mobile in 1927 to a diocese that claimed just forty thousand Catholics in the entire state of Alabama plus a segment of northwest Florida. That number had increased to seventy-one thousand in 1950. By 1964 there were 128,603 Catholics in the Mobile-Birmingham Diocese, representing 32,206 families. More than twenty-four thousand (24,236) of those lived in the Pensacola, Florida, area, which until 1968 was under the administrative care of Mobile. In 1950 there were one hundred parishes in the diocese, and sixty-two mission stations. In 1960 there were 126 churches that had reached parish status, and still sixty-two missions. In 1964 there were nineteen churches with sixteen hundred or more Catholics on the rolls, and almost twenty-five thousand children in Catholic grade or high schools.⁸

The story was similar for Georgia. In 1950 the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta (which covered the entire state of Georgia then) contained forty-one parishes and thirty additional mission stations. In 1951 there were just over thirty-one thousand Catholics

⁷ "Diocese To Spend Four Million Dollars," *The Catholic Week*, November 16, 1945, p. 1.

⁸ "Final Statistic In CCD Census Report Numbers 128,000 Catholics in Diocese," *The Catholic Week*, January 17, 1964, p. 1; "CCD Census Report Parish-by-Parish," *The Catholic Week*, January 24, 1964, p. 7; Thomas J. Toolen, "My Jubilee Story" [February 1960], Alabama Department of Archives and History,

in the state, an increase of twenty-three hundred in two years' time. In 1956 church officials created the Archdiocese of Atlanta out of the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta, assigning seventy-one counties of northern Georgia to the See City. At that time, those seventy-one counties contained 23,695 Catholics. Within six years that number increased almost 83 percent, to 43,342 in the 1963 diocesan census.⁹ Approximately thirty-six thousand of those were located in the five-county metropolitan Atlanta area.¹⁰ By 1960 the Diocese of Savannah consisted of between twenty-five and twenty-nine thousand Catholics. In the eighty-eight counties in the diocese, there were thirty-three parishes and nineteen mission churches. In 1968 the entire state of Georgia contained 84,032 Catholics, who worshipped in seventy-one churches. That placed them third in size behind Southern Baptists and United Methodists among white denominations.¹¹ By 1975 their numbers had reached 98,666, the fourth largest number behind the Baptists, Methodists, and A.M.E. churches.¹²

Over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s, the Catholic population in Alabama and Georgia increased more than 80 percent. The general population only

Montgomery, AL; Charles E. Nolan, "Modest and Humble Crosses: A History of Catholic Parishes in the South Central Region (1850-1984)," Appendix 4, p. 328.

⁹ "Archdiocese Census Count Shows 43,342," *The Georgia Bulletin*, May 30, 1963, p. 1.

¹⁰ Questionnaire To Determine Current Religious Resources of Judicatories in Five County Metropolitan Atlanta. Box 021/1, Folder 16, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

¹¹ "Confessional Groups, Membership and Number of Churches Within The State of Georgia in 1968 Compared to National Membership." Box 036/4, Folder 31, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

¹² "Church Membership in Georgia By Denomination In Order of Number of Communicant Members," November 20, 1975." Box 036/4, Folder 31, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta; n.d. "Diocese of Savannah, Statistical Report," Box FB-1, A - Ap, Folder, "Apostolic Delegation (2), 1948-

doubled between 1940 and 1980. The statistics reveal that Catholic growth far outpaced the rest of the region. As in the North, the Catholic population in Alabama and Georgia congregated in the urban centers. In 1963 more than 80 percent of the Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Atlanta was located in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham's 1964 census demonstrated that Mobile, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Pensacola, Florida, contained the overwhelming majority of Catholics in the diocese. Metropolitan Birmingham registered 39,712 Catholics; Mobile had 38,116; Pensacola 24,336; and Montgomery 13,762. That left between twelve and thirteen thousand in other cities and rural areas of the state. Industrial and technological growth, the advent of cities like Atlanta as a commercial and transportation hub, and federal investment in the form of military bases and defense contracts attracted this surge in population.

The story of each parish in Atlanta and Georgia differs by time of foundation, but the circumstances surrounding the advent of each one can fit into one of several patterns. A few churches in Mobile and Savannah trace their history back to the nineteenth century. Priests were more available in those locales, since those cities were the center of Catholic activity in their respective states. In other districts, a group of Catholics might gather in someone's home whenever a priest made his rounds through several parishes under his charge. When a certain section had a Catholic population large enough, the bishop would then appoint a priest--assuming one was available--and priest and people would locate or build suitable facilities for mass and other services.

Obtaining sufficient numbers of clergy proved to be a difficult chore. One statistical report from Savannah circa 1960 pointed to the desperate need: "If we are to bring our holy faith most effectively into the mission areas of South Georgia we must have more priestly personnel."¹³

The history of Holy Family Church in Lanett, Alabama, provides a good example of the development of a parish from a small Catholic population originally formed around a particular family. The first known Catholics came to Lanett, a small town east of Auburn on the Georgia border, in 1875. William Merna Sr. brought his family from Ireland that year to help develop a peach orchard, near what is now Fairfax, Alabama. Merna's partner returned to Ireland in 1890, and Merna went to work for the Atlanta & West Point Railroad. In addition to the Mernas' seven children, there were a handful of other Catholics in the area. Those families would gather at the Merna home once a month when priests from either Atlanta or Montgomery would come to celebrate mass. On other Sundays, the Merna family would make the ninety-mile trip via railroad from Lanett to Montgomery for services.¹⁴

In 1910 Bishop Edward Allen of Mobile invited priests of the Congregation of the Missions (the Vincentians) to accept responsibility for the Catholic population of east Alabama. Their assigned territory covered some fifty-three square miles across nine counties. At the time only 152 Catholics lived in that area. Parishioners built Holy Family Church in 1915, and in 1927 Lanett received its first full-time pastor, a

¹³ "Diocese of Savannah, Religious Report." Box FB-1, A - Ap, Folder, "Apostolic Delegation (2), 1948-1960," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

¹⁴ "History of Holy Family Church, Lanett," *The Catholic Week*, September 24, 1965, p. 12.

Vincentian priest. Holy Family served as the home parish of families from surrounding communities in Alabama and Georgia as far away as thirty-five to forty miles from Lanett. By the 1940s, Holy Family's pastor, Rev. John F. King, C.M., added a Sunday mass in Roanoke, Alabama, some thirty-five miles north of Lanett. In 1952 the Catholic population of Lanett had grown to the point at which Holy Family needed three Sunday masses to accommodate its members.¹⁵ By mid-century, then, this rural parish that began around a few Catholic families had steadily increased in size and influence since the late nineteenth century.

Huntsville's Holy Spirit Church offers a contrast, as its foundation can be traced directly back to the migration of Catholics into the South following World War II. Diocesan authorities observed Huntsville's postwar growth and anticipated a tremendous expansion of the population due to the advent of the nation's space program. In 1954 they authorized the pastor of St. Mary of the Visitation parish in downtown Huntsville to purchase ten acres of land outside of town near the airport. Between 1950 and 1960, Huntsville's population grew from sixteen thousand to seventy-two thousand, a boom attributable directly to industrial and technological development in the city. Red Stone Arsenal, the army's site for missile-defense research, opened during the 1950s, and NASA added a space flight center in 1960. According to the 1964 diocesan census, Visitation was the largest parish in the diocese, with 5,895 Catholics from 1,483 families. In 1959 Visitation began construction of

¹⁵ Ibid.; see also "History of Parish At Auburn Reflects Growth Of Church," *The Catholic Week*, September 23, 1966, p. 13.

facilities that would become a school and then a mission station of the church. The school opened in 1960, and work on Holy Family church began in 1963. Msgr. John A. McGonegle, pastor of St. Mary of the Visitation parish, first celebrated mass in the new church on April 4, 1965, and Archbishop Toolen dedicated it in October of that year. By 1965 the Catholic population had grown so much that Holy Spirit School had four hundred students, and another eight hundred Catholic children attended public school. The majority of this new population resulted from migration into Huntsville because of the space program and military installations there.¹⁶

Industry also came to formerly rural parts of the South. In 1962 development came to Winfield, Alabama, in the form of what the Catholic newspaper labeled "a new plant." Winfield is in the northwest corner of the state, over an hour's drive north of Tuscaloosa and west of Birmingham. A "national recruiting service" brought in outside personnel to staff the plant. Many of these newcomers were Catholics who drove eighty miles roundtrip every Sunday for mass in Jasper, Alabama. A parishioner's two-car garage and then a building that formerly housed a dry-cleaners provided space for mass, before Church officials responded to the new Catholic community's need and built a mission chapel. Congregants of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit received a permanent brick structure in 1965. The mission became a full-fledged parish in 1973.¹⁷ Modern

¹⁶ "Dedication of Holy Spirit Church, Huntsville, Oct. 27," *The Catholic Week*, October 22, 1965, p. 11; "Recent Rapid Growth Of Church in Huntsville," *The Catholic Week*, October 22, 1965, p. 12; "Final Statistic In CCD Report Numbers 128,000 Catholics in Diocese," *The Catholic Week*, January 17, 1964, p. 1; Rose Gibbons Lovett, *The Catholic Church in the Deep South: The Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, 1540-1976* (Birmingham, AL: The Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, 1980), pp. 126-128.

¹⁷ "New Church In Winfield, Ala., Gift of Orth Family," *The Catholic Week*, March 20, 1964, p. 1; "It Takes Desire," *The Catholic Week*, March 20, 1964, p. 1; Lovett, *The Catholic Church in the Deep South*, pp. 128-129.

South population growth increased the number of Georgia's Catholics as well. By 1963, for example, Clayton County, located just south of Atlanta, was the fastest growing county in the state. In 1950 its population made it thirty-fourth in the state; in 1960, it was thirteenth. The influx had come so quickly that Jonesboro, the county seat, did not even have a mission chapel by 1963, while the surrounding towns of Griffin, Thomaston, Jackson, McDonough, and Newnan all did.¹⁸

The primary reason that the growth of the Catholic population in Alabama and Georgia between the end of World War II and the 1970s kept pace with that of the rest of the general population was migration of Catholics into the South. But Church officials were not content merely to follow their parishioners around building churches. Evangelism was crucial to Alabama and Georgia Catholics--or at least to their leaders. They were motivated by their conviction that the people of the South needed to hear their message. At first glance, Catholic revivalism might seem self-contradictory. After all, revivalism was the central component of southern Protestantism, the phenomenon most closely associated with the region. But the Catholic Church was no stranger to revivals. The southern Church evinced a revivalist pattern similar to what was otherwise common in the region.¹⁹ Catholics evangelized people familiar with a particular religiosity, one that emphasized the centrality of the emotional, crisis conversion.

¹⁸ "Church Hopes Grow In Jonesboro Area," *The Georgia Bulletin*, November 14, 1963, p. 6; "Dispatches From Some of Georgia Missions," *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 11, 1963, p. 2.

¹⁹ For nineteenth-century Alabama, see Oscar H. Lipscomb, "Catholic Missionaries in Early Alabama," *Alabama Review* 18 (1965): 124-131.

One Georgia Catholic suggested a fundamental difference between the understandings of salvation when he joked about a Jesuit missionary priest who could hold his own against Protestant revivalists popular in the region. In 1952 Hugh Kinchley wrote to the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta's Vicar General, "This Jesuit from India that has been conducting the Novena of Grace at the Sacred Heart Church was one of the best speakers ever to be heard from the pulpit of that church." Using a phrase common to Protestant evangelicalism, Kinchley sarcastically noted that the priest was so good, in fact, that "He has just about 'saved' me."²⁰ Kinchley's wit reveals a keen awareness of the differences between Catholics and Protestants over understandings of salvation.

At the same time, however, by nature southern Protestantism has demonstrated extraordinary similarity to Catholicism. For both groups, religion is a predominant aspect of their cultural and social landscape. Samuel Hill has described the South as the "most visibly religious region of the country."²¹ Theologian David Tracy refers to Catholics' "God-in-the-world" religious vision as the "analogical imagination." According to Tracy, the Protestant imagination is "dialectic," which sees the divine as opposed to the world ("God and the world").²² As noted above, southern Protestants do evince this sort of religious sensibility. But the southern Protestant mind is divided. Historian Charles Reagan Wilson has argued that such worldly objects as funeral home

²⁰ From Hugh Kinchley, Augusta to Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, Savannah, March 15, 1952. Box FB-5, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1951-1952," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

²¹ Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, p. xii.

fans, pictures of Elvis, and statues of Confederate heroes represent sacred objects for white Protestant southerners.²³ But this sacred imagination must be seen in opposition to the South's revivalist tradition. Revivalism and the crisis conversion mentality of southern Protestantism create a discontinuity in this experience. The sense that God is always present in the world is disallowed by revivalist preachers. Instead, they convince listeners that God is completely absent; in order to encounter him, one must experience the crisis moment of sinful awareness and conversion. For a Catholic, by contrast, God is present and experienced in the world.

Catholic revivalism in the nineteenth century concentrated on effecting an individual crisis conversion similar to Protestant revivalism. Historian Jay P. Dolan has labeled this phenomenon "sacramental evangelicalism".²⁴ And southern Catholics in the mid-twentieth century continued this tradition, with local parish missions (or revivals) and street preaching. This is a close parallel to what Sam Hill labels as the "central theme" of southern Protestantism, but with very different origins, parameters, and ramifications. Rather than individual conversion per se, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia were concerned about bringing people into the fold of the Catholic Church--the "one true church." There was much more involved in conversion to Catholicism than in evangelical individual conversion. Whereas Protestants invited converts to struggle with the sacred, Catholics invited people to enter into it.

²² Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*.

²³ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980); idem, *Judgment & Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

Dolan has traced the origins of the parish mission back to sixteenth-century Europe and the Catholic counterreformation. Religious orders such as the Jesuits in Spain, Vincentians in France, and the Redemptorists of Italy adopted the parish mission as their primary apostolate in service to the Church. In America, where newly arrived immigrants lacked regular access to a priest and the sacraments, missions provided a small degree of institutional support. Much like Protestant evangelicalism, Catholic revivalism concentrated on individual conversion, with nightly “hellfire” sermons intended to rouse common sinners to emotional states of sorrow for wrongdoings and confession and penance.²⁵

In the nineteenth century parish missions fostered devotional Catholicism. Those revival meetings (in Protestant parlance) instructed laity in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the sacred heart of Jesus, and frequent communion. Lengthy missions also offered Catholics the opportunity to purchase the items necessary for their spiritual development: rosaries, pictures, holy cards, and the like. In addition, the mission fostered the “culture of sin,” constantly reminding wayward Catholics (and even those who failed to realize how wayward they were) of the torments of hell reserved for unrepentant sinners.²⁶ An emphasis on a personal crisis conversion perhaps reminds observers more of evangelical Protestantism than Roman Catholicism; but nineteenth-century revivalist priests made “heartfelt conversion . . . the goal of every

²⁴ Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), pp. 91-112.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism*; *Idem*, *The American Catholic Experience*, pp. 213, 226-227.

parish mission" and took great pride (which, perhaps, indicates their own sinfulness) themselves in the great numbers that waited their turns outside confessionals. By the 1940s and 1950s, devotional Catholicism was on the decline, replaced by an as-yet-undefined, amorphous individualized spirituality that prefigured reforms of the Second Vatican Council.²⁷

From a Catholic perspective, Alabama and Georgia were promising mission fields, where conversions should be welcomed. Catholics comprised a negligible proportion of the overall population, and even where their numbers were strongest at mid-century they were a minority in an overwhelmingly Protestant land. But despite struggles against prejudice and discrimination, Alabama's and Georgia's Catholic populations did not always live as the embattled minority. Indeed, with World War II drawing to close, they were primed to perform what they saw as their duty to evangelize the non-Catholic populations around them. The war forced a type of national cohesion that united North and South, Catholic and Protestant, black and white against a common enemy. Formerly marginal members of society, Catholics were now prepared to assert what they perceived as their right to be taken seriously in the public sphere. Since they now shared a common national identity, southern Catholics assumed it was their duty to share their religious duty with others as well. But first they had to encourage their own.

The parish missions that were held at individual churches throughout Alabama and Georgia most closely resembled Protestant revivals. Rather than being held in

²⁷ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, pp. 227, 384-390; Timothy Kelly, "Suburbanization and the Decline of Catholic Public Ritual in Pittsburgh," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Winter 1994): 311-330; Timothy Kelly and Joseph Kelly, "Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Gender Roles, and the Decline of Devotional Catholicism," *Journal of Social History* 32 (Fall 1998): 5-26.

borrowed or rented public locations or on street corners, which was the case in areas with no established Catholic churches, various parishes hosted these. Intended in part to reach non-Catholics--they even advertised in local secular newspapers--parish missions primarily served to reinforce the Catholic community, encourage devotional practices, and instruct laity in the faith. Virtually every announcement of forthcoming missions urged Catholics to "bring their non-Catholic friends with them."²⁸ The Rev. Francis Broome, a Paulist from Winchester, Tennessee, announced that the mission he would conduct at Montgomery's St. Andrew's parish in 1947 would "be conducted in [a] non-controversial manner. . . . The purpose of this mission is to set forth in a clear and understandable way, the position of the ancient Christian church, especially in these days when so many are asking, as did St. Paul, 'Lord what will thou have me do.'"²⁹

St. Catherine's Church in Mobile provides one good example of this series of services. The announcement of the 1945 mission that appeared in *The Catholic Week* listed five objectives for the week's services. First, mission planners sought to remind those in attendance of lessons learned from the catechism: "'Why did God make us? To know my Maker to serve Him and to save my soul.' 'What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?' Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul." Spiritual activities also were meant to develop a "living faith"

²⁸ See, for example, "St. Paul's Mission Given By Paulist Fathers, Oct. 7-21," *The Catholic Week*, October 5, 1945, p. 3; "Fr. Silvius To Hold St. Margaret's Mission," *The Catholic Week*, March 16, 1945, p. 2; "Saint Catherine's, Mobile, To Observe Mission March 10th," *The Catholic Week*, March 1, 1946, p. 2; "Father Broome To Conduct Mission At St. Andrew's," *The Catholic Week*, March 7, 1947, p. 7.

²⁹ "Father Broome To Conduct Mission At St. Andrew's," *The Catholic Week*, March 7, 1947, p. 7.

among lay persons, "arouse the lukewarm to a life of fervor," "encourage weary, despondent sinners to make their peace with God," and reclaim fallen away Catholics.³⁰

In March 1945 St. Catherine's held its annual mission, led by Father Anthony Maher, a Passionist priest who traveled widely leading similar missions. Revivalist priests were most often members of religious orders like the Passionists, the Paulists, and the Congregation of the Mission (Vincetians) who performed similar missions in a variety of parish locations. In February Maher, for instance, presided over a series of services at Mobile's Little Flower Parish, and from St. Catherine's he was scheduled to move to Pensacola for a weeklong stay there.³¹ During St. Catherine's mission, he spoke at all four Sunday morning masses on March 4, and then during the week three masses took place each morning. Following the first morning mass, Maher would give "a brief instruction," and then nightly at 7:30 he would conduct additional instruction in Catholic doctrine. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, moreover, Maher held special teaching activities for the children of the diocese.³²

Evening meetings often involved doctrinal lessons for Catholics as well as sermons aimed at the conversion of non-Catholics. At St. Anthony's Parish in Ensley, Alabama, Father John J. Conway, C.M., preached a series of sermons on salvation, sin, "the great truths of Eternity, on particular vices, the beauty of virtue, the mercy of God

³⁰ "Father Maher C.P. Is Mission Speaker," *The Catholic Week*, March 2, 1945, p. 2.

³¹ "Little Flower Church Is Looking Forward to Week's Mission," *The Catholic Week*, February 16, 1945, p. 2; "Little Flower Mission Draws," *The Catholic Week*, February 23, 1945, p. 2; "Fr. Maher to Conduct Mission At Pensacola," *The Catholic Week*, March 16, 1945, p. 5. See also "Missions Scheduled In Apalachicola, Port St. Joe," *The Catholic Week*, October 22, 1949, p. 6.

³² "Father Maher C.P. Is Mission Speaker," *The Catholic Week*, March 2, 1945, p. 2.

and the Love of God for souls."³³ The Reverend James Glynn, C.M. preached on salvation, mortal sin, death and judgment, marriage, "mercy and delay," and sins of the tongue.³⁴ Specifically for Catholics, priests would instruct parishioners in saying the Rosary, offer the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, or perform a ceremony for the renewal of baptismal vows.³⁵ They also sold "religious articles." Alabama and Georgia sources fail to reveal exactly what these items were, but historian Dolan says these were probably prayer books, devotional guides, rosaries, and pictures.³⁶

At mid-century, Catholics recognized that they were competing with Protestants for the unchurched and increased their efforts to reach non-Catholics. A 1948 Jesuit provincial meeting in New Orleans noted the need for mission work in rural areas, where Catholics registered negligible numbers. The minutes of that meeting noted that from one-third to two-fifths of rural southerners belonged to no church. There was work to be done. "Protestants realize the importance of apostolic work in rural areas, and are at work," the Jesuits noted. "A recent article in the *Christian Century* tells of the work of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and urges Protestants to do likewise." Included on the list of tasks Jesuits should undertake to offset Protestant

³³ "Fr. Conway to Conduct Mission at St. Anthony's Parish, Ensley," *The Catholic Week*, September 23, 1950, p. 3.

³⁴ "St. Patrick's Church Holding Annual Mission," *The Catholic Week*, April 21, 1951, p. 6.

³⁵ See, for example, "Father T. Powers, C.P. Ends Mission Week at St. Aloysius Church," *The Catholic Week*, March 4, 1950, p. 5; "Fr. John J. Conway To Conduct Fairhope and Daphne Missions," *The Catholic Week*, January 20, 1951, p. 2.

³⁶ See, for example, "Father Ralph, C.P., To Conduct Mission At St. Augustine's Parish," *The Catholic Week*, February 27, 1948, p. 3; "Fr. Conway to Conduct Mission At St. Anthony's Parish, Ensley," *The Catholic Week*, September 23, 1950, p. 3; Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, p. 213.

advances was "street preaching in rural areas. . . . for the formation of new parishes and mission stations, the reclaiming of fallen away Catholics and making converts."³⁷

This type of traveling revival show suggested that the New Orleans meeting had ample precedent, and the Jesuits were not the only group active in such evangelism. The Dominicans, Paulists, Redemptorists, Vincentians, and secular priests all were energetically involved in open-air evangelization. Indeed, from the 1930s through the 1960s several groups of Catholics--both lay and religious--made street preaching and open-air apologetics their apostolate. They targeted primarily rural areas in the South (from Oklahoma and Missouri to North Carolina), where Catholics were rare and prejudice and mistaken--sometimes odd--ideas about the Catholic Church prevailed.³⁸

This mission work to non-Catholics elicited many inquiries and a few converts, but they focused as well on strengthening whatever small community of Catholics existed to begin with. The rural South isolated Catholics who migrated ahead of the institutional Church, especially in northern and central Alabama and most of Georgia outside the coastal area. Through their street preaching enterprises the North Alabama Missions band located many of those "fallen aways" and tried to incorporate them back into the fold. In a 1945 pastoral letter soliciting mission funds and encouraging more vocations to the priesthood, Bishop Toolen painted a bleak picture for Catholics. Those isolated co-religionists were suffering discrimination, and as a result the Church

³⁷ "Catholic Rural Life: Discussion Outline," New Orleans Province Institute of Social Order Meeting, Spring Hill College, January 2 and 3, 1948. Loose Folder, "Faculty - Pictures and P.R.," Fr. Albert S. Foley, S.J. Papers, Spring Hill College Archives, Mobile, AL.

suffered. "These are discouraging missions. In going around I find so often that the Catholics are demoralized by the prejudice they have to face. Quite a few of them have joined Protestant churches. I surely am eager for the weather to warm up that I may go out to these places to preach and if nothing else to raise the morale of our Catholic people."³⁹

The Dominicans brought their "motor chapel" to places like Crawford, Georgia, where they could locate only three Catholics in the general population. During one particular stop, more than 500 non-Catholics gathered over two nights in Crawford to hear the Dominican missionaries' message. Probably reflecting trouble such missionaries had experienced in the past, one report indicated that the Dominicans "were well received by the local sheriff," as well as others in the town. Townspeople had even invited the traveling preachers to return. In Colbert, another small Georgia town only a few miles northeast of Athens, 200 non-Catholics braved cold temperatures--"huddled into 35 parked cars"--"as they witnessed the religious motion pictures and listened to the missionary's sermons."⁴⁰ In World War II era rural Georgia, preaching services such as these no doubt served as local entertainment, which is one possible explanation for the turnout in inclement weather. But such a utilitarian interpretation is ultimately unsatisfying. Southerners were a religious people, even if

³⁸ Douglas J. Slawson, "Thirty Years of Street Preaching: Vincentian Motor Missions, 1934-1965," *Church History* 62 (March 1993): 60-81; Debra Campbell, "Part-time Female Evangelists of the Thirties and Forties: The Rosary College Catholic Evidence Guild," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 5 (1986): 371-83.

³⁹ "Diocese Support For Students To Priesthood Is Urged By Bishop," *The Catholic Week*, April 13, 1945, p. 1.

⁴⁰ n.d., "Dominican Motor Chapel Starts Work In Georgia"; "The Dominican Motor Chapels Have Very Successful Holy Year Program." Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 1, Folder, "Motor Chapel Ministries," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

their behavior sometimes did not validate the sincerity of their commitment. Because of their denominational affiliation, Dominicans may have seemed an oddity to most southerners. But revivals were familiar to them, “religious events that kept alive the hope of salvation,” according to historian Ted Ownby. Many non-Catholics were no doubt drawn to the nightly sermons based on that acquaintance.⁴¹

In the early 1930s, Father Frank Giri established the North Alabama Mission Band, whose assignment was open-air preaching in areas with but a miniscule Catholic population. These “street preachers” served a couple of different purposes. Their primary goal was evangelism, but Catholic “protracted meetings”—to use a nineteenth century Protestant phrase—also fulfilled a secondary, but equally important, goal. They provided support for the few Catholics scattered across those counties that lacked a priest and regular access to the sacraments, and attempted to draw back into the fold those “fallen aways” who had begun to neglect their Catholic duty. In 1945 *The Catholic Week*, reflecting the optimistic belief that a properly delivered message would alleviate ecumenical tensions in the South, opined that “The work of the Catholic Church in the South is cut out for it. It takes the warming light of the truth to banish bigotry and prejudice. The Church must be known before it can be loved. If the people will not come to the Church, then the Church must go to the people.”⁴² And go these priests did. But their tasks were not simple.

⁴¹ Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 162; on lay perceptions of revival meetings, see pp. 144-164.

⁴² “Street Preaching,” *The Catholic Week*, September 21, 1945, p. 4.

If they hoped to catch the attention of non-Catholic southerners through their sermons, street and mission preachers had a rich legacy to live up to, for southerners had a taste for rhetoric. Partly because of low levels of literacy and few available books, southern society in general was predominantly an oral culture and marked by the importance of the spoken word. This proved true from the earliest fiery evangelical Protestant sermon through the demagogues of the New South period. In his study of southern culture, published in 1941, journalist W.J. Cash described the "Southern fondness for rhetoric." This "gorgeous, primitive art . . . flourishes wherever [the simple man] foregathers." In the South, the white man in many ways followed "the example of the Negro," who would "seize on lovely words, roll them in his throat" and spew them forth in utterly meaningless phrases, until "there is nothing left but the sweet, canorous drunkenness of sound, nothing but the play of primitive rhythm upon the secret springs of emotion."⁴³ One anthropologist, furthermore, has argued that for Southern Baptists, ritual is verbal. They create the sacred by speaking "the Word;" that is, by reading the Bible and preaching the sermon Baptists experience sacred ritual.⁴⁴

For the southerner, then, rhetoric became, according to Cash, "not only a passion but a primary standard of judgment, the *sine qua non* of leadership. The greatest man would be the man who could best wield it."⁴⁵ That oratory frequently reflected the

⁴³ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, with a new introduction by Bertram Wyatt-Brown (New York: Vintage Books, 1991; originally published 1941), p. 51.

⁴⁴ Miles Richardson, "Speaking and Hearing (in Contrast to Touching and Seeing) the Sacred," in *Religion in the Contemporary South: Diversity, Community, and Identity*, eds. O. Kendall White Jr. and Daryl White (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), pp. 13-22.

⁴⁵ Cash, *The Mind of the South*, p. 51.

intense emotionalism that characterized the southern Protestant revival experience. Faithful listeners believed they could discern an evangelist's proximity to the Holy Spirit based on the manner in which he appealed to the crowd. Historian Randall Miller has written that, because a large majority of priests in the South were not native to the region, they had a difficult time mastering southern customs and idioms; therefore, the sermon proved to be a particular problem.⁴⁶ For Catholics, moreover, such religious emotionalism could not be trusted.

One Alabama mission priest, Father Henry Thorsen, recalled that his sermons were often on a favorite southern Protestant topic. "[T]hey liked to hear about sin and hell," although the existence of Purgatory presented problems for Protestants otherwise emotionally involved in concerns about the afterlife.⁴⁷ A second priest who began his stint with the mission band in the 1960s pointed out that "you don't street-preach the way you preach in a Catholic church." Instead, Father Paul Donnelly recalled in the 1990s, "You get up and for forty-five minutes, rant and rave about Jesus like a good old Jimmy Swaggart or . . . evangelist type of thing."⁴⁸ But when describing his mission band meetings, Father Joseph Durick reported that his listeners' favorite portion of the

⁴⁶ Randall M. Miller, "A Church in Cultural Captivity: Some Speculations on Catholic Identity in the Old South," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, eds., Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), pp. 48-49.

⁴⁷ Father Henry Thorsen, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien, September 9, 1992, Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 8, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

⁴⁸ Father Paul Donnelly, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien, September 25, [n.d.], Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 7, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

sermons was "the vast, deep logic of a man's purpose in life."⁴⁹ About another mission priest, a reporter noted that "From reason and revelation he proves convincingly that a peaceful and happy life can be attained only by following the direction of God."⁵⁰ If the truth were known, the "deep logic" and "reason" portions of the sermons may have been the priests' favorite segment more than the audience's. After all, trying to live up to the South's rhetorical reputation could be a chore. But this demonstrates one obstacle priests faced in their evangelism.

The pattern of Alabama's open-air evangelism varied little from year to year. A group of five or six priests--in the late 1940s and 1950s led by Father Joseph Durick, later bishop of Nashville--traveled through Jefferson, Walker, Talladega, Shelby, and Bibb counties in North Alabama, "teaching Catholic Doctrine on the streets." A separate group covered counties in the southern part of the state. Speaking before open-air gatherings to laity seated on wooden folding chairs, from the back of a bus or trailer with a mobile public address system, or from a willing Catholic's front porch, priests delivered sermons, answered inquiries about the Catholic faith during "question box" periods, and handed out pamphlets. Father Durick later admitted that he and his fellow priests would occasionally "stuff this question box ourselves." They did this innocently enough in their efforts "to disabuse people of wrong notions concerning the Church."⁵¹ Father Durick also reported attempts to foster devotion to the Virgin Mary and "giving

⁴⁹ "Street Preaching in The Birmingham District," *The Catholic Week*, September 21, 1945, p. 5.

⁵⁰ "St. Anthony's Plans Mission, Oct. 7-14," *The Catholic Week*, September, 28, 1945, p. 3.

⁵¹ Bishop Joseph A. Durick, interview 1, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., October 2, 1992. Transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien. Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 11, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

out rosaries to those who promise to say them.”⁵² In addition, seminarians would canvass neighborhoods and pass out pamphlets. Those with questions could also visit the Catholic Information Center, a store in downtown Birmingham that offered Catholic publications and answers to non-Catholics’ questions about the faith.⁵³ Besides the priests, female religious organized the women and children and taught them Catholic doctrine.⁵⁴

The missions of Our Lady of the Rosary, devoted to evangelism in south Alabama, covered four counties and thirty-two hundred square miles, all without a single Catholic Church in 1949. *The Catholic Week* reported that the few Catholics living in that region “were scattered, isolated and in many cases discouraged, since it was impossible to hear mass frequently.” In response to this Catholic desert, Father Frank Giri constructed a temporary chapel above a mechanic’s shop, and established “inquiry” and “instruction” classes for First Communion for adults and “over-aged children.”⁵⁵ Giri’s ministry to non-Catholics, then, first had to begin with administering spiritual aid to struggling Catholics.

⁵² “Street Preaching In The Birmingham District,” *The Catholic Week*, September 21, 1945, p. 5.

⁵³ Father Henry Thorsen, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O’Brien, September 9, 1992, Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 8, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

⁵⁴ Bishop Joseph A. Durick, interview 1; Sister Mary Alice Vese, n.d. Talk transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O’Brien, Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 4. Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

⁵⁵ “Father Giri To Preach At St. Paul’s, B’ham, Next Sunday,” *The Catholic Week*, March 11, 1949, p. 1.

In 1949 Father Giri described his own technique for covering non-Catholic areas of South Alabama. "I have a car and trailer and a film projector. After a street sermon I arrange a meeting at some public building. There film slides of the life of Christ are shown and I give the Catholic interpretation of this beautiful story. Showing of the film takes several nights and meanwhile interest in [sic] developed by the audience which gets larger. I also pass out Catholic literature, which explains confession, the Holy Eucharist and other phases of the faith."⁵⁶ Giri's trailer chapel provided the only church facilities in some counties. In February 1948, Bishop Toolen dedicated two new church buildings in south Alabama, Our Lady of the Visitation in Jackson and Our Lady of the Annunciation in Monroeville. Our Lady of the Visitation began with ten members who received mass in Giri's trailer, which, *The Catholic Week* reported, "was parked on the grounds where the present chapel now stands."⁵⁷

Father Thorsen, the diocesan mission priest in north Alabama, recalled that of course the intended audience for his street preaching was non-Catholics. But after careful inquiry and probing, "we come to find out that a goodly number of them had ancestors that were Catholic that came here originally from Germany, Italy, from . . . Ireland and England and other places and they didn't have a church, a Catholic Church out there, so they ended up going to the nearest church." Thorsen believed they had not been catechized properly to begin with, "so they didn't have the reasons why they had to

⁵⁶ "Father Frank Giri Describes Mission Work In South Alabama," *The Catholic Week*, January 14, 1949, p. 2.

⁵⁷ "Bishop Dedicates 2 Missions Churches In South Alabama," *The Catholic Week*, March 5, 1948, p. 1.

stick to the faith or the means to alone get together and preserve the faith.”⁵⁸ They wanted to worship God, but their migration had far outpaced the movement of their church. So they made do with what was available to them--Baptist and Methodist congregations, the services of whose preachers were more readily accessible. It was in those communities that faith needs were met, where they devoted their religious energies.

In 1993 one Alabama woman remembered Monsignor Ed Foster's request that her family--the only Catholic one in Minor, Alabama--allow street preaching from their home. "When you're the only Catholic family in a community, -- and you have street preaching in your yard, It was very dangerous," Alice Slatsky recalled. One Baptist church in that small town west of Birmingham refused to give the Catholic evangelists easy access to the community. The Baptists issued "long letters against us, and telling people not to even let us in their house. . . . Not to have anything to do with us." During one particular Holy Week, moreover, local miscreants threw rocks through church windows and disrupted services.⁵⁹ The small handful of Catholic families in Childersburg, Alabama, also experienced the strain of being a religious minority and the stress of being expected to share their resources with mission teams.

In 1992 Amy Winters feared that Father Abraham, the priest who rounded up five Catholic families in Childersburg, Alabama, did not receive enough credit for his

⁵⁸Father Henry Thorsen, transcript of interview, September 9, 1992.

⁵⁹ Alice Slatsky, transcript of interview by Sister Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien, January 14, 1993, Oral History Project, Box 2, Envelope 13, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

work. Few people, she noted, would understand the pressures “unless they lived on the mission and understood the circumstances of living in a bootleg community where Catholics were people you hated, wished to get rid of if you could. . . . You had to meet your religion face to face.” The Ku Klux Klan was strong in the area, as well. The post-World War II Klan announced its customary opposition to Catholics--“‘Catholics, Jews, Communists, Negroes and northern agitators’ [are] the principal threats to the ‘destruction of the white heritage,’” the Montgomery Klan announced in 1956--but concerned itself primarily with issues of race and civil rights. Despite one potentially hostile encounter with a Klansmen, Winters remembered no burning crosses. Still, she and her fellow Catholics felt isolated, “a group apart,” as she put it.⁶⁰

The annual reports of the North Alabama Mission groups reveal the pattern of growth and the limited success of the mission band among the Catholic population throughout north Alabama. This mission band included those small churches and stations located in the counties around Birmingham that did not yet qualify as full-fledged parishes. The Catholic population grew slowly but steadily. Churches’ contact with a priest and therefore the frequency of services varied. In some instances there were enough families in an area to justify weekly mass, while others saw a priest only a couple of times a month.

⁶⁰ Joe and Amy Winters, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O’Brien, September 11, 1992, Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 2, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama; “1,200 Attend Klan Rally Staged Here,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, September 9, 1956; see also, “Montgomery Chosen As Hub of New 6-State KKK Group,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, August 24, 1949. Both clippings in Public Information Files – General File, Container SG6966, Folder 962, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

In 1944 the North Alabama Mission group covered 534 white Catholics in fifteen church stations. All of these were white, with some thirty-three being converts to the faith and another thirty-six being confirmed that year. A year later that number had grown to 724 white mission Catholics in seventeen stations. Forty-nine of that number were converts. Reflecting the transient nature of portions of the population, the mission at Pell City, for example, had four families--eleven Catholics--in 1944 with mass being celebrated twice a month. A year later, only one of those families remained. Between 1945 and 1950, the Catholic population of the mission stations fluctuated, increasing to as many as 776 in 1946 before dropping to around 300 in 1950. There were fewer mission stations by half in 1950, however, with over fifty converts. A few of the mission chapels had been raised to parish status, while others disappeared from use when the Catholic families in the area moved elsewhere. Some of the mining villages, like Blocton, where Italian Catholics had labored in the mines since the nineteenth century, simply disappeared when natural resources were depleted.

In the five-year period after 1950, the number of Catholics assigned to the North Alabama Mission Band increased again. The missions covered 1,063 in 1955, and that number remained high well into the 1960s. The most obvious explanation for this increase is that following 1955 the missions appealed to a greater number of "colored" in the area. In 1955 there were 317 African Americans in the missions along with 746 whites. Beginning with the 1957 report, the number of black Catholics assigned to the mission band dropped drastically. The explanation for this sudden decrease probably lies in the creation of a new parish for blacks. By 1956, there were enough African

American converts in the Birmingham area to form a new parish, Our Lady Queen of the Universe. When the archbishop disbanded the North Alabama Mission Band in the late 1960s, mission priests were responsible for 1,042 Catholics -- 768 whites, and 274 blacks. There had been fourteen stations in 1965.⁶¹

The North Alabama Mission Band and its south Alabama counterpart, the missions of Our Lady of the Rosary, reached into the rural and suburban counties of Alabama. Similarly, in Georgia Glenmary, Redemptorist, and diocesan priests serviced mission stations in rural areas and suburban counties outside Atlanta. As the region's population continued to increase, parish construction continued throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1963 the *Georgia Bulletin* reported in its annual mission appeal that there were "many parts of the Archdiocese, particularly in Northern Georgia, where tremendous Catholic opportunity is waiting for us." Those opportunities existed "not only in the rapidly growing towns--many of them near Metropolitan Atlanta--but especially where four or five counties are at present being served by one priest and a chapel."⁶² As late as 1970 Bishop John L. May, who succeeded Toolen as Mobile's ordinary in 1969, wrote to a colleague in New Orleans that, "As you know, much of this Diocese is heavily missionary, with many of our counties without a single resident priest or a Catholic Church."⁶³ The majority of the Catholic population lived in the two states'

⁶¹ Annual Reports of North Alabama Missions. Cabinet RG 2.06, North Alabama Missions Folder, Records of the Chancery, Records of Parishes, Statistics, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama; Lovett, *The Catholic Church in the Deep South*.

⁶² "Georgia Mission Appeal Sunday," *The Georgia Bulletin*, November 7, 1963, p. 1; see also, "St. Luke's Dahlonga - Apostolate In The Mountain Country," *The Georgia Bulletin*, November 7, 1963, p. 3.

⁶³ From Bishop John L. May to Mr. Thomas Finney, Archdiocesan Chancery Office, New Orleans, November 30, 1970. Bishop May papers, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Mobile, AL.

urban areas, but each diocese's mission labors signaled efforts to unite the diverse southern Catholic Church under a single banner.

When Father Horgan bemoaned the lack of institutional support for Alabama's rural Catholics in 1948, he lamented the absence of a public presence of Catholicism in "what is known locally as the Bible Belt of Alabama." Such a public presence provided "the consolations of our Holy Faith" in "a real house of God." Horgan pointed to the importance of a local parish for the spiritual and, no doubt, psychological wellbeing of the region's Catholics. Whereas Baptists reached the sacred through verbal communication, for Catholics a church building was a sacred place, a visible symbol of hope in a potentially hostile environment. But even with these small houses of God throughout the region, the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia needed something more to unite the disparate population. Church leaders realized the need to incorporate rural and urban Catholics, newcomers and indigenous population under one umbrella. Their Roman Catholicism bound them into a subculture and forced them to negotiate boundaries between their Catholic identity and southern culture. During the fifteen years after the end of World War II, Catholic leaders effected reforms that strengthened the Church's institutional presence in the region and increased connections to Catholic organizations outside the region.

Catholics were outsiders in the region, and during--in Father Horgan's words--"continued storms of ignorance and bigotry." Protestants would not let them forget it. Still, Catholics asserted their right to the public domain. Street preachers and mission priests who made direct appeals to non-Catholics staked out claims to sacred space.

Public street corners and open fields temporarily became consecrated territory, sites at which Catholics shared their religious vision with southern society. Even larger and more important public demonstrations occurred during annual Christ the King celebrations and veneration of the Virgin Mary. At mid-century, southern society underwent tremendous population growth, economic development, and social and cultural modernization. Catholics played an integral role in that transformation. Their negotiations of the boundaries between their own sacred environment and southern society revealed how blurred those lines had become by the 1940s and 1950s. In their own defense against prejudice, and in their annual Christ the King celebrations and veneration of the Virgin Mary, southern Catholics fashioned a Catholic identity that consolidated their scattered population behind their shared Roman Catholicism and associated themselves with the wellbeing of southern--and American--society.

CHAPTER 2
'THE INTOLERABLE ALIEN':
ANTI-CATHOLICISM AND CATHOLICS AS "OTHER" IN THE SOUTH

In 1941 journalist W. J. Cash published *The Mind of the South*, now considered a classic study of southern culture. He argued that despite the region's fast-rising urbanization and industrialization, white southerners evinced a cultural and ideological continuity. As he phrased it, "it is easy to trace . . . a complex of established relationships and habits of thought, sentiments, prejudices, standards and values, and associations of ideas . . . common in one appreciable measure or another." One element of that network of ideas was a social fear that bred anti-Catholicism. From the perspective of an early-twentieth-century resurgence of "a bitterly narrow spirit of Protestantism," according to Cash, Catholics were "the intolerable Alien, the bearer of Jesuit plots to rob them of their religion by force."¹ Cash described the South's religious milieu in the first half of the twentieth century, when the region's Catholic population was never large enough to threaten the predominance of Protestantism in the regional mind. The South's Catholic population increased following World War II, and with outside help built an institutional infrastructure and new public presence. But the Church in Alabama and Georgia remained marginal, especially when compared to the

¹ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, with a new introduction by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, first quotation, p. xlviii; subsequent quotations, pp. 333-334.

size and strength of the northern Church. Examples of prejudice and discrimination further marginalized Catholics, and their outsider status helped to cement religious identity for both Protestants and Catholics.

Following World War II and into the 1950s, southern Protestants found the transition to modernity so confusing that Catholics as the "intolerable Alien"--despite their minority status--served as an easy target of hostility. Anti-Catholicism took several forms. First, many southerners feared that the Catholic Church posed a threat to democracy and religious freedom, and in 1949 an Alabama branch of Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State opened. Second, Reformation Days and annual celebrations of a common Protestant Heritage provided platforms to single out Catholics for public scorn. Those occasions gave the South's white southern Baptists, Methodists, Churches of Christ, Presbyterians, and many other denominations and sects the opportunity to coalesce around a common Protestantism and to define themselves in opposition to Catholics. Newspaper editorials and advertisements and circular pamphlets, furthermore, decried the mystery of Catholicism and denounced Catholic interpretations of Scripture and revelation. Finally, alleged former priests or bishops made regular tours of southern Protestant churches and drew curious crowds eager to be horrified by tales of the evils of the Roman Catholic Church.

Anti-Catholicism ranged from examples of fear and suspicion to sincere theological differences between faiths. Ecumenical discussions of those differences would have to wait until later in the twentieth century. In the 1940s and 1950s, Catholics reacted testily to both perceived slights and blatant slander. They could be as

anti-Protestant as Protestants were anti-Catholic. They defended themselves against charges that their church was un-American and opposed to democracy and religious freedom. Catholics in Alabama and Georgia struggled to overcome their "other" status and to make themselves be understood and accepted by Protestants. But their marginalization also contributed to the strengthening of their religious identity. Indeed, anthropologist Gary W. McDonogh has argued that "Both Catholics and Protestants have reified 'the Catholic as Other,' holding dialectic readings of a divisive myth." And "Protestants and Catholics, whites and blacks, natives and immigrants have recognized anti-Catholicism as a socially constructed fact of life and built identities around it even as they may have contested (or used) it."² In Alabama and Georgia, those competing identities revolved around struggles to define American liberty and to decide whose tradition best represented the nation's highest ideals. In response to anti-Catholicism, Catholics accepted their outsider status and appealed to a rich Roman Catholic tradition to sustain them. Their "other" status contributed to religious pride and became one boundary marker for southern religious identity--for Protestants and Catholics alike.³

Anti-Catholicism has been a prominent feature of American culture throughout certain periods of the nation's history. From the organized nativism and convent raids

² Gary W. McDonogh, "Constructing Christian Hatred: Anti-Catholicism, Diversity, and Identity in Southern Religious Life," in *Religion in the Contemporary South: Diversity, Community, and Identity*, eds. O. Kendall White Jr. and Daryl White (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), pp. 67, 77. On anti-Protestantism, see Jay Dolan, "Catholic Attitudes Toward Protestants".

³ On identity-formation from central, internal factors, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); and R. Merfyn Jones, "Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992): 330-357. On the definition of group identity based on negative factors, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992): 309-330.

of the nineteenth century to the popular writings of Paul Blanshard in the twentieth, prejudice against Catholics became a national pastime for many Americans.⁴ In 1977 priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley described anti-Catholicism as America's "ugly little secret." The problem persisted, Greeley insisted, most often unnoticed or ignored, into the late 1970s. According to historian John T. McGreevy, moreover, anti-Catholicism was an integral component of American liberalism in the 1940s and 1950s. Twentieth-century American liberalism insisted that religion was an entirely private matter and must be kept out of the public realm where it might threaten national unity. In addition, only an emphasis on individual autonomy—"thinking on one's own"—would sustain American democracy.⁵ Catholics in Alabama recognized the widespread acceptance of recent anti-Catholicism. At least in their state, the editor of *The Catholic Week* wrote, "those who are attacking the Church are not found in the under-privileged or unenlightened portion of the nation's population, but rather among the important people in various fields of national life. Instead of ignorant persons, prompted by emotion and prejudice, some of the better minds in the country are now entering the

⁴ On anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century, see Ray Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1938); Jenny Franchot, *Roads To Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); and Marie Anne Pagliarini, "The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic Literature in Antebellum America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 9 (Winter 1999): 97-128. See also, Edward Cuddy, "The Irish Question and the Revival of Anti-Catholicism in the 1920s," *Catholic Historical Review* 67 (April 1981): 236-255.

⁵ Andrew Greeley, *An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism In North America* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1977); Lynn Dumenil, "The Tribal Twenties: 'Assimilated' Catholics' Response to Anti-Catholicism in the 1920s," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (Fall 1991): 21-49; John T. McGreevy, "Thinking on One's Own: Catholicism in the American Intellectual Imagination, 1928-1960" *Journal of American History* 84 (June 1997): 97-131.

combat against Catholicism. They do not hide their identity under hoods, but on the contrary seem ever ready to state their views in print or over the air and in the courts."⁶

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Paul Blanshard wrote *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949) and *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (1951).

Blanshard maintained that Catholicism was antidemocratic and therefore antithetical to American ideals, an argument that liberal intellectuals like John Dewey widely praised.⁷ In the minds of the Church's critics, pervasive Catholic separatism (exclusive beliefs, insistence on natural law, parochial schools, and hospitals) presented problems of integration into American society. Liberals questioned how Catholics could become democrats and hence good Americans. The collapse of democracy and the concomitant rise of Church-supported fascism in Europe only made the perceived problems still harder to resolve. Liberals traced the origins of Americanism to the Protestant Reformation and linked democratic traditions to the Protestant reformers. In doing this, McGreevy notes, "scholars clearly distinguished Catholic from American." Debates raged over state support of parochial schools versus public schools. Only the latter would teach democratic values and American ideals. Strident anti-Catholicism waned over the course of the 1950s, but only after anticommunism took on increasing significance and diverted liberals' attention in that direction.⁸

⁶ "Take One - Protestant - Wake Up," *The Catholic Week*, January 7, 1949, p. 4.

⁷ Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949); idem, *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951).

⁸ McGreevy, "Thinking On One's Own," p. 113.

White southerners shared the liberal conviction that Catholics were narrow-minded, unthinking puppets of Rome. Southerners also tended to be wary of the mystery and--in Tom Watson's words--the "sinister wonders" of Catholicism. Georgia was home both to Watson, the South's most notorious anti-Catholic firebrand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the second incarnation of the Ku Klux Klan. Before World War I, Watson issued vitriolic newspaper and pamphlet attacks on Catholicism as "the Deadliest Menace to our Liberties and Our Civilization."⁹ In addition, in 1915 the Georgia legislature passed its own version of a convent inspection bill. The Klan, moreover, wielded considerable power in local politics, controlling several seats on Atlanta's school board in the early 1920s.¹⁰ In response to the 1915 Veazey Bill, a group of Georgia Catholic laymen met in Macon in 1916 and formed the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia. The CLA waged its own campaign to correct misinformation about Catholicism from 1916 until its dissolution in the 1960s.¹¹

Anti-Catholicism was prevalent throughout the South, but the documentation for instances in Georgia is more complete because of the CLA. By the 1940s, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia were already familiar targets of prejudice and bigotry. Being the

⁹ C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 419.

¹⁰ Philip N. Racine, "The Ku Klux Klan, Anti-Catholicism, and Atlanta's Board of Education, 1916-1927," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 57 (Spring 1973): 63-75. On the Klan in Athens, GA, see Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). MacLean does not, however, have much to say about anti-Catholicism and the Athens Klan.

¹¹ Felicitas Powers, R.S.M., "Prejudice, Journalism, and the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 8 (Summer 1989), pp. 203-204; Richard Reid, K.S.G., "The Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia," *The Missionary* 55 (June 1941): 143-147. Box R.G. 5, Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Bigotry, Folder, "Articles by Richard Reid," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

targets of such attacks necessarily shaped their identity, and their response to that prejudice revealed the nature of that identity. Examples of southern bigotry pointed up Catholics' shared Roman Catholicism; when members of the laity defended themselves and their church, they drew on the tradition and doctrine they shared with Catholics everywhere. They also appealed to American ideals of fairness and religious freedom. They responded, therefore, as both Catholics and Americans, a dual identity that in Catholic minds were not incompatible.

In the wake of World War II and a perceived need for national unity, the National Council of Christians and Jews sponsored, and many of America's churches recognized, an annual Brotherhood Week in February. For at least that one week, the nation's religious groups were supposed to downplay denominational differences and promote interfaith dialogue. This was especially important during World War II, when Americans sought common patriotic ground. Catholics participated in the annual events, but, despite their good-faith efforts to cooperate, those in Alabama and Georgia found themselves maligned by Protestants. Catholic and Protestant reaction to Brotherhood Week revealed the breadth of the gap separating them at mid-century. *The Catholic Week*, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Mobile (later Mobile-Birmingham), devoted special issues to Brotherhood Week, and editorials and special articles on ecumenism promoted the annual event to laity. Church leaders in Savannah were more reluctant to participate, perhaps because of their experiences through the CLA.

For Alabama's Catholics, Brotherhood Week presented the perfect opportunity to teach tolerance for and promote understanding of Catholicism among Protestants. An editorial in *The Catholic Week* noted that prejudice and bigotry do not come naturally to children. Echoing President Roosevelt's comments on the importance of Brotherhood Week in uniting Americans of all faiths behind the war effort, *The Catholic Week* proposed that the NCCJ event provided the perfect opportunity to maintain "at home the same degree of understanding and cooperation that our soldiers and sailors are manifesting on the battlefronts. We must match this devotion and this teamwork on the home front. No sacrifice is too great, no discipline too severe, for us at home if we do our part to win the war."¹²

Despite the good intentions of the sponsors' of the ecumenical week, however, at least Alabama's Protestants could not translate the desire for interfaith unity into sensitivity to Catholic feelings. In fact, the 1940s and 1950s witnessed the institutionalization of anti-Catholicism. That is to say, Protestant church organizations themselves became more active in discrimination and expressions of prejudice and bigotry.¹³ The state's Methodist newspaper, the *Alabama Christian Advocate*, urged its readers to "make the world a real brotherhood. This cannot be done unless we get men to live in the spirit of Christ and establish a social order in which the high ideals of brotherhood shall become the high standards of human relationships." *The Catholic Week* lauded the Methodist organ for its "noble sentiments," but expressed dismay at

¹² "Teaching Intolerance To Children," *The Catholic Week*, February 2, 1945, p. 4.

¹³ Lerond Curry, *Protestant-Catholic Relations in America: World War I through Vatican II* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), particularly chapter 2.

what appeared to Catholics to be a double standard. In the same issue, the *Christian Advocate* covered the 1945 statement signed by some 1600 Protestants opposing any Vatican role in the postwar peace process. Taking the periodical's coverage as an endorsement of that document, *The Catholic Week* interpreted this as Methodist anti-Catholicism.¹⁴ This incident illustrates the degree to which Catholics and Protestants were still far apart on ecumenical issues. It also illustrates, from the Catholic perspective, one source of anti-Catholic sentiment. Many Protestants--and most Americans--adhered to a clear double standard. They spoke the language of ecumenism and brotherhood but often failed to practice those high ideals. Uniting behind a shared Protestant identity proved more valuable than true interdenominational inclusiveness.

Savannah's relationship to Brotherhood Week proved just as troublesome and Protestants' motives just as difficult to comprehend. Priests were not allowed to participate in the week's activities; nor were clergy from outside the diocese permitted to appear on such programs within the diocese. In 1950 the executive committees of several Georgia cities' NCCJ chapters attempted to organize a trio of speakers (a Catholic, Protestant, and Jew) to address civic clubs, women's groups, veteran's organizations, and the like during that year's Brotherhood Week observance. Hugh Kinchley, executive director of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, declined the invitation to be his denomination's representative. Diocesan clergy were forbidden to take part, and Kinchley, a layman, acted under the assumption that his professional role with the CLA should preclude him as well. Besides, he wrote to Joseph E. Moylan,

¹⁴ "Is This Brotherhood?" *The Catholic Week*, March 16, 1945, p. 4.

vicar general of the diocese, "While the NCCJ may be doing us some good, I am not as enthusiastic about it as in the past, and am going to ask to be excused on the plea that publication of *The Bulletin* conflicts."¹⁵

Moylan agreed with Kinchley's assessment of the NCCJ and the ultimate good served (or not served) by Brotherhood Week. Lay participation was questionable but still a possibility. Many Catholics would find it difficult to extricate themselves from official ecumenical activities, especially since "so many of our Catholics are associated with Jews." Moylan credited Jews with pushing the interfaith program, then charged that "Protestants are going along as a gesture." Moylan questioned the latter's motives, however. American Protestant opposition to the Catholic government in Spain, to "Internationalization of the Holy Land," and to public aid for parochial schools rang hypocritical to Moylan. "With words they would argue Brotherhood, with actions they seem to inhibit the Church's activities," he responded to Kinchley.¹⁶ Again Protestants' contradictions perplexed the South's Catholics. This no doubt demonstrated to Catholics what Andrew Greeley and John T. McGreevy discovered in the 1970s and 1990s, respectively. Anti-Catholicism has been central to Protestant identity, most often without their realizing--or at least acknowledging--that fact. Because it was so central to Protestant identity, it contributed to Catholic identity as well. Above all else, they were not Protestant.

¹⁵ From Hugh Kinchley to Rt. Reverend Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, Savannah, January 18, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

¹⁶ From Moylan to Kinchley, January 21, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

American anti-Catholicism has European roots traceable to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Catholics in Alabama and Georgia attributed some of the hostility merely to their attackers' Protestantism. But they refused to believe that anti-Catholic prejudice was necessarily a product of Protestantism. Instead, misinformation ran rampant, and non-Catholics needed correction. The seemingly inherent Catholic – Protestant tension sheds light on the religious situation at mid-century and the extent to which southern Catholics drew on the full Catholic tradition to construct their own subculture. That is, they identified with Rome—its traditions, its history, its teachings, and its liturgy—to set themselves apart in a hostile environment. They also appealed to American ideals, for in their estimation, anti-Catholicism was un-American and just plain unpatriotic. Catholics took a couple of different approaches when responding to prejudice. They appealed to a sense of fairness and American patriotism, and they sought to ensure that their attacker and his potential audience were well informed about the tenets of Catholicism. Not all anti-Catholicism was as harsh as some of the rhetoric from Protestant pulpits. In fact, Alabama and Georgia Catholics attributed most anti-Catholic sentiment to misinformation. If Baptists, Methodists, or Churches of Christ did not know any better, the reasoning went, how could they be expected to act? At least that was the way southern Catholics treated those who sometimes disagreed with them.

Separation of church and state was the central issue for many mid-century Protestants, who feared that Catholics presented a formidable threat to that treasured American principle. For Protestants, the Roman hierarchy, "which also claims temporal

authority," as one Atlantan phrased it, posed a direct threat to democracy.¹⁷ Catholics had long sought public support for parochial schools, moreover, which Protestants opposed on constitutional grounds. And when President Harry Truman reappointed Myron Taylor to be his personal representative to Pope Pius XII, Protestants fought hard to reverse Truman's decision. Despite the U.S.'s and the Vatican's mutual opposition to the Soviets, Protestants deluged the White House and State Department with letters. In such an atmosphere, and with cries of concern over church – state issues, the Truman administration failed to establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican.¹⁸

In 1945 *The Catholic Week* informed its readers that the Jesuit weekly, *America*, "warned here that an alleged current anti-Catholic drive by Protestant leaders will result in a revival of the Ku Klux Klan." In late 1944 the Federal Council of Churches launched an "Intensify Your Protestantism" campaign at its annual meeting. Calling specifically on "heirs of the Reformation," the FCC and its regional assemblies, according to the Alabama Catholic organ, called upon its members "to quicken with new and vigorous life their historic opposition to the Catholic Church." The liberal Protestant journal, the *Christian Century*, followed with a series of articles answering the question, "Can Catholicism Win America?"¹⁹ Such alarmist cries from national Protestant organizations and publications proved to Catholics that this was not a

¹⁷ From Ethan A. Smith, Atlanta, GA, to Kinchley, December 24, 1948, Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 3, Folder, "Correspondence w/ Smith & Campbell," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

¹⁸ George J. Gill, "The Truman Administration and Vatican Relations," *Catholic Historical Review* 73 (July 1987): 408-423.

¹⁹ "Ku Kluxism Revival Feared By Catholic Journal, 'America'," *The Catholic Week*, February 23, 1945, p. 7.

uniquely southern problem. They were under siege at home and across the nation. This only reinforced their Catholic identity.

Protestant laity echoed the concerns of the FCC. In 1948 an Atlanta man expressed his anti-Catholic fears to Hugh Kinchley. He equated his "democratic church" with a democratic government. And "some of us who are in a free church cannot see why anyone so situated will not read the bible for themselves and see that the hierarchy of your church is without the slightest authority of scripture and was invented after apostacising in the union of church and state under Constantine."²⁰ In September 1951 an anti-Catholic pamphlet that began as a column in *The Christian Index*--the official organ of the Georgia Baptists--circulated Georgia. The broadside quoted Father Patrick Henry O'Brien, who spoke on behalf of "We the Hierarchy of the Holy Roman Catholic Church" and warned Americans that "We are going to have our laws made and enforced according to the Holy See and the Popes and the canon law of the Papal throne." The Catholic Laymen's Association found no evidence of there being a priest by that name, but such "Romish Aspirations"--the pamphlet's title--sparked alarm among Georgia's Protestant population.

Catholics often responded to Protestant attacks with their own prejudices. For them, separation of church and state was a Protestant issue that opened the door for communist infiltration of America. Catholics drew what they perceived as separation of church and state's logical conclusion, namely, wholesale secularization of American society. In Catholics' minds, Protestantism equaled secularism and therefore was bad

²⁰ From Ethan A. Smith, Atlanta, GA, to Kinchley, December 24, 1948.

for America. Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State sprang up in the late 1940s. Catholics took particular affront at POAU's agenda and, in their defense, pointed to their own faithfulness to constitutional principles. In 1949 the POAU came to Alabama, with chapters opening in Mobile and Birmingham. Alabama's small Catholic population expressed alarm at that development, even as they downplayed the group's significance. After all, *The Catholic Week* suggested, this was but "a very small group of bigoted Protestant ministers and a few other Americans who have proved themselves ready to go to any extent, even to that of leaning away over towards communism, rather than acknowledge the true worth of American Catholicism."²¹ And that "true worth" came with impeccable credentials in church – state issues. Indeed, a separate *Catholic Week* editorial placed Catholics in the category of "the other Americans" mentioned in POAU's title.²²

When the POAU opened its Birmingham branch in 1949, *The Catholic Week* anticipated "its inevitable and most vicious attacks on the Catholic Church and on Catholics." The Alabama organ reprinted an article from *Our Sunday Visitor*, a national Catholic weekly defending the Church against predictable charges that Catholics oppose democracy and would seek unduly to influence the American political process. The column pointed to the Church's diversity to support its contention that "the Catholic Church is the most democratic institution in the world." The periodical obviously

²¹ "Who Are Our Friends?" *The Catholic Week*, April 9, 1949, p. 4. On Birmingham's chapter, see, "Birmingham To Be Headquarters Of State Unit of Anti-Catholic POAU," *The Catholic Week*, April 9, 1949, p. 1. On Mobile's chapter, see "POAU Unit Being Formed In Mobile," *The Catholic Week*, April 23, 1949, p. 1.

²² "... and other Americans...." *The Catholic Week*, April 9, 1949, p. 4.

confused pluralism with democracy, but the point was clear. In Catholics' minds, their church was perfectly compatible with American ideals and institutions. In addition, simply because the headquarters of the National Catholic Welfare Conference was in Washington, D.C. "does not mean at all that it operates a lobby." The newspaper was sure that an informal poll of congressmen and senators would reveal that Catholic clergy sought to influence public policy less than clergy from other denominations did. In short, the POAU's fears were at best unfounded. At worst, they were vicious attempts to draw other Protestant organizations into the anti-Catholic fight.²³

An Edmundite priest, Father Francis Donnellan, attacked the POAU from a different angle. To him the organization failed the tests of true Christianity and true patriotism. Separating church and state would "give us an atheistic state, for only an atheistic government could meet the standards they have set." Protestant and Other Americans United, then, would "lead the United States into communism." In 1949 Donnellan entreated 250 members of the Catholic Men's Breakfast Club of Mobile "to fight this menace to Christianity and country by living Christ-like lives."²⁴ The Edmundite asserted the Catholic belief that Catholicism more truly represented American ideals and was better capable of reinforcing the nation's Christian heritage. Not only were Protestants responsible for opening the door to Communism; their influence on American society had led to "materialism and secularism." For Alabama's Bishop Toolen, the Catholic press served as the best defense against misinformed anti-

²³ "What Catholic Editors Are Saying," *The Catholic Week*, April 9, 1949, p. 4.

²⁴ "Mobile Catholic Men's Breakfast Club Hears Denunciation of Poau," *The Catholic Week*, April 23, 1949, p. 2.

Catholicism and the perils of communism. In a pastoral letter urging financial support for *The Catholic Week*, Toolen told would-be readers, "If you study the methods of our enemies, you will note that one of their aims is to destroy the Catholic Press. This has been successfully accomplished in every country that the Communists have taken over."²⁵ In a 1948 letter to an Atlanta Protestant, Georgia's Hugh Kinchley linked "recent decisions by the Supreme Court" to "a spirit of secularism that is seeking a complete separation of church and state in this country." This was not an achievement the founding fathers wanted, Kinchley concluded.²⁶

In 1950 the threat of communism cast a sinister pall over a nation that should have been relishing its rise to global prominence following its victory in World War II. But just the hint of communist association tarnished bright careers, and anti-communism became a national pastime.²⁷ At Mobile's 1950 Protestant Heritage Day celebration, Dr. Frederick C. Grant, an Episcopalian professor at New York's Union Theological Seminary, once again coupled Catholicism with communism, claiming that both shared similar totalitarian roots. Catholics did not respond in kind publicly, but privately Msgr. Moylan offered an ironic interpretation of the source of public attacks against his church. Rather than the Catholic Church being in league with communists, as Grant and others maintained, it was Protestant churches that were loyal to foreign

²⁵ "Bishop Toolen Urges Support of 'The Catholic Week' As Diocese Observes Catholic Press Month," *The Catholic Week*, February 18, 1949, p. 1.

²⁶ Kinchley to Mr. Ethan A. Smith, Atlanta, GA, December 29, 1948, Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 3, Folder, "Correspondence w/ Smith & Campbell," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

²⁷ Lisle A. Rose, *The Cold War Comes To Main Street: America in 1950* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), pp. 22-38, 117-165.

political systems. In August 1950 Moylan expressed to Hugh Kinchley his conviction that "Very much of these attacks upon the Church are Communistic inspired, they have infiltrated the Protestant pulpits to a serious extent." Church of Christ clergy did not receive high salaries "and it is not impossible that [J.A. Dennis, editor of Georgia's bitterly anti-Catholic newspaper, *The White Horse*] is obtaining money from sources outside Christianity. The madness and fury of his words . . . should prove his undoing."²⁸ Moylan privately acknowledged, furthermore, that the problem was much more serious than just renegade Protestant preachers. Savannah's vicar general suspected "members of the New Deal, particularly those in the State Department" of being "more un-American in selling the Country out to Russia than the Knotty Knobs of the KKK, who, whatever their private depredations, have never completely betrayed the Nation nor delivered millions of people into the slavery of Communism."²⁹

Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, a national organization, provoked Catholic reaction in Alabama. In their defense, they linked themselves to events, ideas, and traditions outside their local situation. Also on the local level were annual celebrations of the Protestant culture--in the form of Reformation Days or Protestant Heritage Days--which consistently reinforced for Catholics that they were an embattled minority that needed to be constantly vigilant. They also gave Catholics the opportunity to assert their patriotism and the Catholic

²⁸ From Moylan to Kinchley, August 3, 1950; From Julian V. Boehm, Atlanta to Hugh Kinchley, Augusta, August 1, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

²⁹ From Moylan to Kinchley, February 4, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

Church's compatibility with American liberty. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, cities in Alabama and Georgia alike set aside special days in which they celebrated the region's Protestant heritage. These celebrations are curious reminders of the common bond linking the area's non-Catholic churches. Despite the appearance of a singular Protestant culture in the South, there were wide theological divides between, say, Baptists and Churches of Christ, and between Methodists and Presbyterians. The label Protestant means little apart from the presence of a Catholic other. Yet Baptists, Methodists, and Churches of Christ in Atlanta, Savannah, Mobile, and Birmingham chose to emphasize that shared identity.

These celebrations of Protestantism often became deliberate invitations to bash Catholics. Atlanta's 1949 Reformation Day Rally brought four thousand participants to hear Congressman Graham A. Barden of North Carolina, the chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee on Education. Barden echoed the familiar separation of church and state theme. He told the crowd that principle was "far more important than Federal aid to education and if there must be a choice, I, with Protestants over the nation, will give up Federal aid." Barden drew applause when he attacked the Catholic Church in all but name, particularly their campaign for tax support for parochial schools, a perennial issue of concern for Catholics since the nineteenth century. He argued that "there are 256 denominations in America. Only one has attempted to get tax money for church schools--and, so far as I know, the other 255 oppose that one!"³⁰

³⁰ "Barden Sees Separation More Important Than Aid," Religious New Service, October 31, 1949. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 3, Folder, "Reformation Day 1949," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

The Savannah Reformation day celebration that same year featured Methodist Bishop Paul B. Kern, of Nashville. Kern gave at least passing reference to the ostensible purpose of the gathering, namely, the events the compelled Martin Luther to attach his 95 Theses to the Wittenberg church door. In a November 7 letter to the editor of the *Savannah Morning News*, the Catholic Laymen's Association's executive secretary Hugh Kinchley addressed Kern's mischaracterization of indulgences and church history. Kern attacked the sixteenth-century pre-Reformation church for preventing lay access to the Bible and selling indulgences in return for absolution from sin. He also claimed that the Protestant faith was responsible for individual liberties. Kinchley first pointed to the normally good ecumenical relations in Savannah and the Catholic contribution to the betterment of the local community in the form of schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other welfare. He conceded that some people abused indulgences, but then he defended the doctrine, arguing that they "are not an easy means of obtaining pardon for sin." Instead, no applicant was dismissed "without grace" and those who could not afford the fee "were to give their prayers for the kingdom." Kinchley finally noted the irony in so closely relating the Reformation with the separation of church and state. For, Kinchley maintained, it was European civil powers that spread Protestantism, and Germany, England, and Denmark, for example, all had established state churches.³¹

In 1950 Dr. Frederick C. Grant, the Episcopal anti-Catholic spokesman, told several thousand Mobile Protestants that "Romanism and Communism are

³¹ From Kinchley to Editor, *The Morning News*, Savannah, GA, November 7, 1949. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 3, Folder, "Reformation Day 1949," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

fundamentally totalitarian." Both also encouraged overpopulation, he lectured, and contributed to high poverty levels. Communism was "the natural economy of scarcity [*sic*], while Roman Catholicism makes the patient endurance of poverty a virtue." He then sounded a familiar political warning. Once the Catholic Church reached a 51 percent majority in the America, "it will begin to take over our political institutions." Such a harangue was nothing new from Protestant leaders in the 1950s, but Mobile Catholics were reluctant to believe that Grant spoke for all Protestants. *The Catholic Week* editorialized that of course local Catholics would be "pained" at such an attack. "But such is the foul nature of Dr. Grant's address that even greater must be the pain it caused in the hearts of sincere Protestants, in whose name it was made."³² Alabama's Catholics, then, appealed to a general sense of Christian fairness and American liberty, the violation of which would also surely shame other Protestants.

These Reformation and Protestant heritage celebrations reveal something else about American religion in the years after World War II. Southern Protestant churches, following almost one hundred years of virtual isolation from the American mainstream, had begun to share once again in the national religious culture. The coming decades would see American evangelicalism returning to acceptability and a position of respect. Anti-Catholicism provided the linchpin for Protestant identity, as well as one element that drew North and South together. At Mobile's 1950 Protestant Heritage Celebration, for example, the principal speaker was New York seminary professor Grant, and

³² "Issue Taken With Heritage Day Attack," *The Catholic Week*, November 11, 1950, p. 1; "Heritage Day In Mobile," *The Catholic Week*, November 11, 1950, p. 4; "Catholic Spokesmen Hit 'Hate Sermon' At Protestant Event," NC New Service, Mobile, AL, November 20, 1950. Box R.G. 5, Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Literature, Unlabeled Folder, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of Washington, D.C., moreover, was a fixture at Atlanta's celebrations and a leader in the POAU.³³ Regional chauvinism disappeared in these celebrations. In at least this instance, religion became one factor in the re-integration of the South into the national mainstream.

Protestant Heritage and Reformation Days were not the only--or even the most common--instances of anti-Catholicism southern Catholics faced. Examples of prejudice surfaced in publications throughout the region. Newspapers and pamphlets in Alabama and Georgia regularly published anti-Catholic libel, often spreading blatant untruths and unproven rumors about Catholicism. Members of the laity monitored those publications and rose to the defense of their Church. Indeed, the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia was founded expressly for that purpose. In 1949, for example, the *Morgan County (Ga.) News* printed a series of articles written by a Baptist minister which, according to the executive secretary of the CLA "were anti-Catholic in tone." The CLA ran an advertisement in the *News* offering free information about the Catholic Church to anyone who requested it. The editor of the paper--"a religious fanatic" to whom "nobody in the county paid any attention"--reluctantly ran the ad, but refused payment for it.

He also tried his hand at Baptist-style evangelism. In correspondence with Hugh Kinchley, the editor attempted to explain "how you could be saved from your sins by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, but you would not hear from

³³ From Bishop Francis E. Hyland, Savannah to Most Rev. John B. Montini, S.T.D., Pro-Secretary of State, Vatican City, October 10, 1953. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1953-1954," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

me." Maybe ten thousand years in hell would do the trick, the editor surmised; then "you will think how you persecuted Christians. In your heart you know that no priest can save you from hell."³⁴ In 1952 Kinchley's report to the CLA's annual convention described "a considerable amount of anti-Catholic literature sent us by another woman in Georgia who is pleading with the executive secretary of the Laymen's Association to accept Christ as his Saviour and be saved."³⁵ The Catholic layman delivered that statement with a smirk, one could imagine, and no doubt elicited at least a few knowing chuckles from his audience. The path of salvation differed for Catholics and Protestants, and the latter's zeal probably made many of the former uncomfortable.

The CLA received some response to their newspaper ads, and Kinchley carried on an active correspondence with some of Georgia's Protestant laymen about Catholicism. Some of the exchange of letters reveal both Kinchley's and his correspondents' attempts to define their identity in oppositional terms. The primacy of the Bible (in Protestant minds) versus Tradition, the 1950 proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, and competing interpretations of church history separated the two sides. In September 1948 Kinchley responded to an editorial entitled, "Priceless Bible," in the *Douglas County (Ga.) Sentinel*. The editorial, according to Kinchley,

³⁴ Report of the Executive Secretary To The Annual Convention of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, October 30, 1949. Box, The Catholic Laymen's Association, 1938-1957, Minutes of Meetings and Conventions, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, Minutes, Reports, 10/49-"; "About Roman Catholics," Advertisement in *Morgan County News*, Madison, GA, January 1949. Box R.G. 5 Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Bigotry, Folder, "1949 Advertisements & Letters to Inquirers," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

³⁵ "Report of the Executive Secretary to the Annual Convention of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, at Waycross, Georgia," October 26, 1952, Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1953-1954," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

noted that "for many centuries the Bible was a closely guarded book, unavailable to the common man."³⁶ The editorial made no explicit mention of Rome, but Kinchley feared that readers of the Douglasville, Georgia, periodical would incorrectly infer that the Catholic Church should be held responsible for that scriptural repression. Kinchley's pre-emptive defense pointed out Rome's role in establishing the canonical books and the Venerable Bede's translation of Scripture "into Saxon, which was at that time the language of the people of Britain."³⁶

Following the Reformation tradition's adherence to *sola Scriptura*--the argument that Holy Scripture was the final authority on matters of faith--southern Protestants held special reverence for the Bible. One distinction they drew between themselves and Catholics was the tension (in their minds) between biblical authority and reliance on Tradition. Indeed, Ann Taves has argued that at least in the nineteenth century the Bible served as a "devotional symbol" for Protestants, an equivalent to the Catholics' Blessed Sacrament.³⁷ J. G. Malphurs's initial correspondence with Kinchley has not survived, but the CLA executive secretary's 1950 letter to the Albany, Georgia, resident suggests some of Malphurs's concerns about Catholicism. Kinchley responded to a litany of concerns, ranging from parochial schools and teaching religion in public schools, to the pope's temporal power as ruler of a sovereign state, to communism. Kinchley defended the Church's support for the Bible. "No religion holds the Bible in higher regard than

³⁶ From Kinchley to Mr. P.D. Mathews, Editor and Publisher, *Douglas County Sentinel*, Douglasville, GA, September 16, 1948. Box R.G. 5 Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Bigotry, Folder, "1948 Letters to Inquirers," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

³⁷ Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 30-32, 126-127.

the Catholic," Kinchley wrote. In fact, "her sons wrote the books of the New Testament." But the Catholic Church predated the canonical scriptures, and "most of our separated brethren must depend on Catholic tradition and history" for the foundation of their faith.³⁸

Several months later, Malphurs wrote an editorial column for the *Albany (Ga.) Herald* in response to the recent papal proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven. Malphurs complained that the new dogma "is absurd, and contradictory to Bible facts." The New Testament mentions the mother of Jesus only a few times, and no relevant passages point to her ascension into heaven. For Malphurs, "this dogma is another proof that Roman Catholics do not accept the Bible as God's complete revelation to man."³⁹ In defense of Pope Pius XII and Catholics everywhere, Kinchley reiterated that "Christianity did not begin with the Bible," an impossible feat since "millions of Christians . . . lived and died before the printing press was invented." When Kinchley wrote that the "Catholic Church is not dependent upon the Bible for her existence, nor is she limited to it in her teachings" he outlined one boundary of both Protestants' and Catholics' identity.⁴⁰ For Catholics, both church tradition and Scripture together were necessary for the discernment of divine truth. For southern Protestants,

³⁸ From Kinchley to Mr. J.G. Malphurs, Albany, GA, July 22, 1950. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 2, Folder, "Religious Persecution," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

³⁹ J.G. Malphurs, "Catholics New Dogma Disputed," Letter to the Editor, *Albany Herald*, n.d. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 2, Folder, "Religious Persecution," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁴⁰ Kinchley, Letter to the Editor, *Albany Herald*, n.d. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 2, Folder, "Religious Persecution." Also see, Kinchley to Mr. Ethan A. Smith, Atlanta, GA, December 29, 1948, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

the Bible alone was the ultimate spiritual authority, the very words of Gods. In this case, both Catholic (Kinchley) and Protestant (Malphurs) defined himself in opposition to the other.

Malphurs' objection to the dogma of the Assumption of Mary revealed a second issue separating Protestants and Catholics. Protestants accused Catholics of worshiping the mother of Jesus and placing her in a position equal or superior to that of her son in the Church. Rose Hill Church of Christ in Columbus, Georgia, sponsored advertisements in the local newspaper to denounce Catholic doctrines concerning Mary. Mary was neither without sin nor perpetual virgin, one advertisement charged. And the notion that Mary is the Mother of God "is repulsive to intelligent and enlightened people. God has no mother."⁴¹ Kinchley again drew on Church tradition to support the Catholic belief, but not before wondering what business this was of Malphurs's in the first place. In response to Malphurs and in defense of Catholicism, Kinchley surmised from his letter that Malphurs was "evidently not a Catholic . . . so it seems that he is disturbed about something which is of more concern to Catholics than it is to him." Nevertheless, Kinchley argued that devotion to Mary was almost as old as the Catholic Church itself, founded "more than 1,900 hundred [*sic*] years ago."⁴²

⁴¹ "Is Mary the Mother of God? Is the Doctrine of Immaculate Conception True?" advertisement in Columbus, Georgia *Ledger-Enquirer*, May 20, 1951; see also, "Ye Shall Know The Truth," *Ledger-Enquirer*, May 27, 1951; and "What About The Roman Catholic Foundation?" *Ledger-Enquirer*, June 3, 1951. Clippings in Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 2, Folder, "Religious Persecution," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁴² Kinchley, Letter to the Editor, *Albany Herald*, n.d. For another response to Malphurs, see Morton Wiggins, Jr., "Youth Defends Catholic Dogma," Letter to the Editor, *Albany Herald*, n.d., clippings in Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 2, Folder, "Religious Persecution," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

The laity in Alabama were not as prepared for that sort of communication with non-Catholics; but priests and lay members of the Knights of Columbus did monitor newspapers and attempted to keep the general public in line with what they perceived to be American ideals of liberty and freedom of expression. When the local Churches of Christ sponsored a series of newspaper advertisements that labeled Catholicism as being "Satanic in origin," the Catholic Priests Association in Birmingham wrote both of that city's daily newspapers, the *News* and the *Age-Herald*, in protest. The priests conceded the right of the Churches of Christ to "freedom of opinion and expression in religious matters." But they failed to understand "how the tenor of such articles serves the cause of religion and public well-being. . . . We are appalled at the thought that any Christian group could so stigmatize their Catholic neighbors as to say that they are allied with Satan and engaged in a work essentially evil." The priests believed they were in excellent company, at least. The charges reminded them of an instance from Scripture when Jesus was accused of casting out demons under the authority of Beelzebul, "prince of devils." Since Christ came not from "satanic origins," then neither did they. Instead, the Birmingham clergy appealed to what they believed to be commonly accepted standards of Christian fairness. The priests concluded, "the advertisements are in bad taste, scurrilous, and insulting to the Christian integrity of our Catholic people."⁴³

⁴³ "Birmingham News Draws Criticism For Acceptance Of Derogatory Advertising," *The Catholic Week*, April 1, 1950, p. 1; "Priests Protest Ads Attacking Church," Religious News Service release, April 21, 1950. Box R.G.5 Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Literature, Unlabeled Folder, Archives of Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA. For an example from the laity, see "Muscle Shoals Holy Name Societies Sponsor K.C. Catholic Information Ads In Local Papers," *The Catholic Week*, May 5, 1951, p. 6.

Publicly, Catholics were well behaved and respectful in their responses to instances of prejudice. But in their private correspondence and other times when individuals let their guard down, their true feelings came to light. The Diocese of Savannah's Vicar General, Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, could be particularly caustic. Criticizing the Southern Baptist doctrine of the autonomy of the local church, Moylan wrote to Hugh Kinchley that taking Baptists' problems seriously was difficult for two reasons. "Each one of them is a schismatic," and "none of them knows that he is, even what schism is." Moylan then recalled the popular joke that a Methodist is just a Baptist who can read and write. "I do not question the ability of Baptists to read and to write, but in matters of religion few of them read right or write right."⁴⁴

In July 1950, the *Albany Herald* printed a letter from a local preacher (in Hugh Kinchley's words) "denouncing various an [sic] sundry thinks [sic] Catholic," including the execution of William Tyndale in 1536 for translation and distribution of the Bible and Catholic opposition to public schools. Moylan speculated that the minister must have received help in preparing his complaints. "Somebody must have given him a book of fairy tales which he thought was history," the sarcastic vicar general surmised, "or perhaps somebody read it to him." Moylan concluded that, "These tub-thumpers do not disturb me seriously. . . . There is no logic, nor dignity, nor theology, but only raw

⁴⁴ From Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, Diocese of Savannah to Hugh Kinchley, Augusta, February 4, 1950, Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

prejudice. This is not a Southern attack either."⁴⁵ Louie D. Newton, an Atlanta Baptist minister and frequent anti-Catholic antagonist, was one of Moylan's favorite targets in private correspondence. In 1950 Moylan described Newton's election to the presidency of the Georgia State Baptist Convention. When Newton proclaimed his support of the separation of church and state, Georgia's Baptists expressed their approval with, in Moylan's demeaning words "their fervent Amens and other hog grunts of pietistic affirmation."⁴⁶ With those expressions of "pietistic affirmation," Baptists affirmed a leader who--more than any other individual--symbolized their Protestant identity. If it did nothing else, their support of Newton confirmed that they were not Catholics. Similarly, Newton offered an easy target for Catholics. If he did nothing else, that is, Newton demonstrated to Catholics what they did not want to be. He detested their religion's core beliefs and represented the antithesis of American liberty and fair play in which Catholics believed. Newton, therefore, provided a clear boundary for both Protestant and Catholic identity.

Protestants were suspicious of the mystery of Catholicism and of "secret" Catholic groups like the fraternal Knights of Columbus--not to mention wary of cloistered nuns and an exclusive, celibate priesthood. Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, published in 1836, alarmed antebellum Protestants with

⁴⁵ From Hugh Kinchley, Augusta to Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, July 24, 1950; Moylan to Kinchley, July 25, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁴⁶ From Msgr. Joseph E. Moylan, Diocese of Savannah to Hugh Kinchley, Augusta, November 16, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

tales of sexual and physical abuse in a Catholic convent.⁴⁷ In 1954 the Book and Bible House, a Decatur, Georgia, publishing outfit, distributed a similar pamphlet. "My Life in the Convent" purported to be the story of Margaret L. Shepherd "as compiled by Evangelist L.J. King," who claimed to be a convert from Catholicism. The pamphlet is not in the Catholic archives, and the extant documents do not describe its contents. But the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia gathered information about King in an effort to discredit him. John E. Markwalter wrote the Book and Bible House, informing them that at best King was baptized a Catholic as an infant but never made his first communion and, apparently, never went to church. By the age of fifteen, "he had become a bar-room 'bum' and had a reputation for incorrigible immorality." The CLA had ample documentation of King's earlier anti-Catholicism. In the early 1920s he was active in Boston, Massachusetts, where he was accused of blackmail and theft. In Missouri and Ohio he stirred up riots, and one Presbyterian pastor ejected King from his church "after listening to one or two of King's filthy lectures." The Book and Bible House, Markwalter warned, would be better off "praying and hopping [*sic*]" than more young women would enter the convent and "devote their lives to the instruction of youth; to the building of character . . . [and to] the sick and the dying."⁴⁸ If the Decatur publishers responded to Markwalter, there is no evidence of that correspondence. But they were not the only group accused of disseminating such inflammatory literature.

⁴⁷ On the Protestant reaction to Monk's "revelations," see Franchot, *Roads to Rome*.

⁴⁸ From John E. Markwalter to Book and Bible House, Decatur, GA, March 30, 1954; and From Markwalter to Members of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, April 1, 1954. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1953-1954," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

Anti-Catholic groups occasionally circulated copies of a purported oath taken by all members of the Knights of Columbus. No documents in the Catholic archives reveal the substance of this "bogus oath." But *The Catholic Week* described the "scurrilous and libelous matter," spread by people "who are susceptible to infection with the virus of intolerance."⁴⁹ Elsewhere, the paper labeled it "false and libelous and is part of a propaganda based on bigotry."⁵⁰ The broadside claimed that the oath was copied from the 1913 *Congressional Record*. *The Catholic Week*, however, provides the rest of the story. The oath was an exhibit in an investigation of the congressional committee on elections, in which the distribution of the oath figured in the defeat of one candidate for Congress. The oath was not new. It had surfaced in Minnesota, California, and Michigan in the 1920s and in Savannah in 1928. In each of those cases, the person who circulated it was convicted on charges of criminal libel. In 1950 the Savannah woman who served six months in jail for distributing the oath reappeared in Warrenton, Georgia, lecturing against the Catholic Church.⁵¹ *The Catholic Week* drew a direct link between this current instance of prejudice and earlier attacks against the Church. The paper's editor credited "Know-Nothings, A.P.A. and their allies and successors" with creating the "most heinous, ungodly and unchristian 'oath.'"⁵²

⁴⁹ "Take One - Protestant - Wake Up," *The Catholic Week*, January 7, 1949, p. 4.

⁵⁰ "The Truth And It's [sic] Proof Regarding the K.C. 'Oath,'" *The Catholic Week*, March 26, 1949, p. 4.

⁵¹ From Kinchley to Moylan, February 21, 1950, Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁵² "The Truth And It's [sic] Proof Regarding the K.C. 'Oath,'" *The Catholic Week*, March 26, 1949, p. 4. See also, "Rep. Battle Disclaims Any Connection With Alleged K. of C. 'Oath,'" *The Catholic Week*, April 2, 1949, p. 1.

Even if they did not spout anti-Catholic rhetoric or read the "bogus oath" of the Knights of the Columbus themselves, many of the South's Protestants proved receptive to Catholic impersonators who made periodic tours through the region. Sponsored by both local denominations and Mason lodges, they usually addressed Protestant worship services (often as part of a revival series). These "ex-priests" and "former bishops" drew crowds of inquisitive minds wanting to know more about the secret intrigues of the Roman Catholic Church. They critiqued Catholic doctrine--as far as they understood it--and told tales of priests and nuns being held in the Church against their will. The Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia maintained a constant vigil across the state for these lecturers and used its resources to expose the itinerants as frauds.

In February 1950 one of the "renegade" priests appeared in Statesboro, Georgia, as a representative of the Christian Mission Organization, an alleged organization of ex-priests. The only account of his visit appears in correspondence between the pastor of St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Statesboro, Father Edward W. Smith, and Monsignor Moylan, the diocesan vicar general. Apparently local Catholics infiltrated the talk. Two Catholic students "asked the apostate the suggested question concerning virginity and accoholism [*sic*]," Father Smith reported. The man was "diabolically clever handling an audience," however. He "heckled" his questioner and dismissed him with the claim that "this was the Catholic answer to anyone attacking the Church." According to Father Smith, the "apostate" began with a customary attack upon the Church's alleged opposition to religious freedom and then touched upon other familiar issues. Protestants in Spain and Italy, the "redeemed" priest claimed, enjoyed no freedom, and there was

"no freedom of press, radio, assembly etc. in Cath. dominated countries." The unnamed speaker expressed a fear common to many Protestants at various times throughout American history. As the number of Catholics increased, so would their influence on public life. In the 1950s, the South and the West were the last fortress against Roman power, but even there Catholic assault appeared imminent. As Father Smith recalled the speech, the "Catholic Church will spend millions of dollars to take over the South and the West to finally take over the United States."⁵³

Catholics, furthermore, must accept "the Roman Catholic Church or the Bible," because "Nothing in the Bible . . . can support the teaching of the C.Ch." This brought a "big Amen" and then "'That's what I told them'" from the host church's pastor. Contrasting views of the availability of salvation also troubled this former priest. As Father Smith reported the speech, there could be "Absolutely no salvation outside the Catholic Church (this stressed very much). 'If I die outside the Church, I'll go straight to Hell'." In the pre-Vatican II church, this actually was a correct understanding of Catholic doctrine--*extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation)-although by the 1950s leaders of the American Church were de-emphasizing its significance.⁵⁴ In 1952 the Vatican condemned a Boston group that had made that dictate central to its Catholic identity. But the laity who attended weekly lectures by Father Leonard Feeney, the charismatic Jesuit leader of the group, at Cambridge,

⁵³ From Edward W. Smith to Msgr. Joseph Moylan, February 20, 1950, Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

Massachusetts' St. Benedict Center were not as heretical as Rome might have it. According to one historian, the reality was that Feeney "had changed the interpretation of St. Cyprian's dictum far less than had the experience of postwar American Catholicism itself."⁵⁵ Still, the importance the unidentified lecturer in Georgia placed on that element of doctrine (which so separated Protestants from Catholics) reveals how Protestants and Catholics continued to define themselves in opposition to the other.

In the mid-1950s a former "postulate" Trappist monk and a man who claimed to be a former New York bishop drew Protestant crowds in Georgia. Their anti-Catholic messages have not been preserved, but it is probably safe to assume that each of them sounded themes familiar to Georgia's Baptists, Methodists, Churches of Christ, and any number of independent Protestant churches. Hugh Kinchley and the CLA investigated each person and could find no evidence of their being affiliated with the Catholic Church. The former "Trappist" was now a "Baptist Evangelist." He finally admitted to his Catholic challengers that the closest he had come to a monastery was "writing to Gethsemani [Trappist monastery in Kentucky], in regard to entrance and receiving an invitation from the Abbey welcoming him if he desired to come." His Augusta trip was

⁵⁴ From Edward W. Smith to Msgr. Joseph Moylan, February 20, 1950; and Kinchley to Moylan, February 21, 1950. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁵⁵ Mark S. Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 21-37; quotation on p. 35.

his first to Georgia; but in 1951, the CLA's records revealed, he took his ministry through New Orleans, "being billed as an 'Ex Priest.'"⁵⁶

In 1954 a Carl Mrzena lectured in Savannah and claimed to be a former bishop of New York. There was no record of his being a bishop anywhere in the United States. The CLA sponsored an advertisement in the local paper publicizing Mrzena's lack of credentials and criticizing anyone gullible enough to believe the "former bishop". "It is 'startling, amazing yet true,'" the CLA's announcement read, mimicking the newspaper blurb for Mrzena's speech, that anyone would refer to the speaker as a former Catholic bishop without verification. "It would seem that the Rev. C. P. Stegall was not being fair to his fellow Savannahians of the Catholic faith." Kinchley reported to members of the CLA that "Reports from Savannah state that the lecture was poorly attended."⁵⁷ But the crowds that did show up to hear these and other traveling Catholic bashers suggest that local Protestants were ready to believe most anything about the Catholic Church.

Most examples of anti-Catholicism in Alabama and Georgia were predictable and fit common formulas. Catholics readily linked this most recent period of anti-Catholic bias to earlier eras, to Know-Nothings and convent burnings of the nineteenth century, and the Klan of the 1920s. Catholics were accused of not supporting freedom of religion, and of being anti-democratic, mysterious and secretive, and opposed to the

⁵⁶ [Hugh Kinchley or John E. Markwalter], Report of Catholic Laymen's Association, n.d., Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 1, Folder, "The Church Militant in Georgia, by H. Kinchley, 1942," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁵⁷ Catholic Laymen Association of Georgia Advertisement, appearing in Savannah Evening Press, n.d. 1954; and From Markwalter to Members of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, April 1, 1954. Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1953-1954," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

Bible. In the minds of many Protestants, those things equaled opposition to Protestantism itself. Those same Protestants also believed that their opposition to the Catholic Church enhanced their own patriotism and proved their American identity. They evinced the exclusive nationalism that characterized the early years of the Cold War in America. According to this reasoning, by its very nature Catholicism was incompatible with Americanism.

Catholics, of course, refused to see the incompatibility. They would wear the "intolerable Alien" badge only so long. Their patriotism and commitment to democracy and religious liberty should be indisputable. Southern Catholics asserted their right to belong and be taken seriously in the larger society. In their minds, they and their message were to be acknowledged and heeded not in spite of their Catholicism but because of it. Protestants should direct their energy toward achieving other goals, instead of defaming a fellow Christian group. Indeed, Alabama's and Georgia's Catholics implied that postwar Protestantism needed Catholicism to save it from itself. "What is needed," Hugh Kinchley wrote Albany's J.G. Malphurs in 1950, "is not for representatives of different religious beliefs to debate their differences, but for them to find ways of working together in a spirit of Christian unity for the common welfare of the nation and the freedom of all of the peoples of the world." The preservation of American liberty depended on "the loyal, patriotic devotion and sacrifice of Catholic, Protestant and Jews united against the onslaughts of atheistic totalitarianism."⁴⁸ Rather than being tangential to American society, Kinchley was saying, Catholics and their

belief system should be central to it. Anti-Catholicism, both explicit and subtle, forced a diverse population to unite. But that united population redrew the boundaries of their identity following World War II. They became Catholic, American, and, finally (when race was the central issue), southern.

³⁸ From Kinchley to Malphurs, July 22, 1950. See also From Markwalter to Book and Bible House, March 30, 1954; and From Markwalter to Members of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia, April 1, 1954.

CHAPTER 3
"BUT WE WERE A GROUP APART":
THE BOUNDARIES OF SOUTHERN CATHOLIC IDENTITY AT MID-CENTURY

In a 1992 interview, a Childersburg, Alabama, woman reflected on the isolation she and other Catholics experienced in the South fifty years earlier: "But we were a group apart. Just as Catholics have been, in my estimation, everywhere I've been in the South for all the years I've been here. They are a group apart. Even in Birmingham."¹ Amy Winters was from Colorado originally; her husband was from Mobile. Winters expressed in simple language how disconnected from southern society the region's Catholics could feel. Her description of being set "apart" from mainstream southern culture suggests in spatial terms the extent to which the region's Catholics felt themselves to be physically and spiritually removed from the Protestant majority. Winters defined her own Catholic identity in opposition to the South's Protestant majority. But the end of World War II brought dramatic changes to the region and the redefinition of Catholics' position in southern society. Anti-Catholicism persisted at least until the early 1960s, but the boundaries of southern Catholics' self-identity shifted in the late 1940s and 1950s. As the Church in the South grew with new converts and the in-migration of nonsoutherners, Catholics moved from outsiders to social and

¹ Joe and Amy Winters, transcript of interview by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., September 11, 1992. Transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien, Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 2, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

cultural insiders. They self-consciously sought to be recognized as both patriotic Americans and good southerners, two concepts, which, in the minds of southerners at least, reinforced one another. Ironically, those beliefs that were so central to Roman Catholics and placed them on the margins of southern society (e.g. devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin Mary) became avenues through which they redefined their group identity. That is, through unique religious celebrations, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia critiqued modern secular society and offered orthodox Catholicism as the solution to the familiar problems of communism, secularism, and materialism.

In the 1940s, southern Catholics were set apart in several ways. In the Bible Belt South, where a reigning evangelical culture developed in tandem with secular society, the Protestant – Catholic divide overshadowed any issues the two Christian groups might have shared. Protestant neighbors singled Catholics out and, as if to gloat in their majority status, even regularly celebrated their shared Reformation heritage. In that regard, Catholic peculiarity in the South stemmed directly from religious differences. But southern Catholics also differed from Catholics who lived in the urban North. Northerners comprised an “immigrant” church, whose population had exploded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, many Catholics were only a generation or two removed from their European ancestry. This “ghetto” Catholic subculture, as historians have labeled it, centered on an ethnic parish, which was most often located in the urban Northeast and Midwest. In his book *Parish Boundaries*, John McGreevy described a tightly knit northern parish that imbued

urban neighborhoods with religious significance. In effect, for northern Catholics the parish became sacred space and shaped their own religious and cultural identity.²

Alabama and Georgia Catholics, by contrast, were so few and scattered that the parish never became the wellspring of identity as it was in the urban North. Even in urban areas where Catholics were most numerous, parish and neighborhood did not always coincide. Instead, southern Catholics constructed an identity based in part on their shared Roman Catholicism. In a sea of Protestants, that is, being Catholic mattered. In the late 1940s and 1950s, what it meant to be Catholic in the South changed. In addition to their religious identity, southern Catholics by mid-century also evinced an eagerness to assert their American identity. They were not alone. Catholics in northern immigrant "ghetto" communities had made significant strides toward the national mainstream and embraced American economic and social norms. In the words of Bishop Toolen, for instance, "Catholicity means Americanism. There is no separation."³

Associating Catholicism with nationalism did not equal wholesale acceptance of American modernity, to be sure. Catholicism had stood at odds with modernism since the nineteenth century. In 1864 Pope Pius IX announced his opposition to "today's liberalism" in the "Syllabus of Errors," and in 1899 Leo XIII denounced "Americanism" in his encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae*. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, American Catholics made certain accommodations to mainstream culture, even

² McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*. For more on "ghetto" Catholicism, see Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, Chapter 7; and Massa, *Catholics and American Culture*, pp. 1-20.

³ "Bishop Toolen To Dedicate 'Our Lady of B'ham' Statue, *The Catholic Week*, February 11, 1950, p. 3.

as they retained what historian Paula Kane has described as "a very bounded sense of separation from it."⁴ Indeed, in the first half of the twentieth century, Catholicism's antimodernism attracted many converts. Literary figures like Allen Tate embraced the Roman Church because they saw in its doctrines an acceptable antidote to what one Tate biographer labeled "the intellectual and social problems of secular modernity" that contributed to the "dehumanizing trends of modern life."⁵ At least on the surface, early-twentieth-century Catholicism resembled the same belief system that had characterized the Church since the medieval era. That continuity and commitment to an apparently immutable orthodoxy comforted those upset over modern society. Catholic leaders in Alabama and Georgia shared this discomfort and argued that American society was vulnerable to material and secular temptations. Ceremonial attempts to rally the faithful behind orthodox Catholicism provided the means to withstand those modern enticements.

At mid-century, a fear of communists made most of the nation patriotic Americans. One's patriotism depended on the degree to which one denounced Stalinism and the secular evils of communism. That anti-communism provided Catholics with a natural entrée into middle America comes as no revelation.⁶ But anti-

⁴ Paula M. Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 315.

⁵ Peter A. Huff, *Allen Tate and the Catholic Revival: Troce of the Fugitive Gods* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁶ See David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years*, p. 96; Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Times Books, 1997), p. 230; Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 60-70; Massa, *Catholics and American Culture*, p. 91.

communism provided the language used by many American Catholics to understand changing social and demographic circumstances in the 1950s. In the South anti-communism was more than a patriotic offensive against Stalinism. It was the defense of a way of life. Along with opposition to the civil rights movement and racial integration, anti-communism formed the very essence of white southern identity in the decade or so after the end of World War II. In the minds of the white South, outsiders had the potential to undermine the racial status quo. According to historian Wayne Addison Clark, among southern whites "sectionalism and racism merged with nationalism to form a political and social overview that equated agitation for racial change with treason."⁷ Southern Catholics asserted their patriotism and regularly trumpeted their impressive anticommunist credentials. In the South following the end of World War II, white Catholics moved from outsider to insider. Initially, that transition occurred as an exercise in self-identification. Catholics spent more time asserting their right to belong than Protestants spent heeding the Catholic cry. They clinched that insider status once segregation again became central to southern regional identity.

The ways in which southern Catholics accomplished this are worthy of discussion. Under religious auspices they assumed increasingly public positions in southern society, even as they sought to strengthen the institutional church in the region. They marked out public arenas and temporarily imbued them with a sense of the sacred. This process helped Catholics redefine the boundaries of their subculture. They were

⁷ Wayne Addison Clark, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Anti-Communism and Segregationist Thought in the Deep South, 1948-1964," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1976), pp. 74-75.

eager to be a public force in the region--or at least a voice of spiritual and moral reason--and they understood their religious system to be uniquely positioned to save southern society from postwar moral decay associated with communism and Protestantism that had carelessly acquiesced to secularization and "materialism."

As Ted Ownby maintains in his book *Subduing Satan*, in the early decades of the twentieth century, Protestants tangled with southern society over boundaries of the sacred. By mid-century, Catholics entered that fray, marking out for themselves sacred space. As the Catholic experience demonstrates, sacred space in Alabama and Georgia was constructed and depended on particular circumstances.⁸ Their sacrosanct public presence, then, was more diffuse than that of their northern counterparts, but it nonetheless moved them into a more prominent position in southern society. Mission priests claimed street corners and open fields that became, however temporarily, sacred space for the Church. Even in Mobile, Birmingham, Savannah, and Atlanta, where the majority of the Catholic population called home, the parish often was not a strong enough symbol of identity. In lieu of a strong parish, then, Catholics in Alabama and Georgia drew their religious identity from the traditions and doctrines of Roman Catholicism. At several specific opportunities, they were able to assert a public presence and claim common territory as their own sacred ground. During annual Christ the King celebrations and ceremonies in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Catholics claimed parts of Mobile, Pensacola, and Birmingham, and for an afternoon imbued it with sacred meaning.

⁸ On the creation of sacred space, see David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995).

For Catholics an inner-directed spirituality centered on family and home was the norm throughout the nineteenth-century and the first half of the twentieth century.⁹ But by the 1940s, Catholic leaders in Alabama and Georgia were making concerted efforts to expand the Church's infrastructure in the region, strengthen parish life and encourage engagement with southern society. This strengthened the Church's presence and enhanced its own authority. In the parish missions of the 1940s and 1950s, priests sought to develop a deeper, more disciplined faith among the laity. In addition, the street preaching apostolate sought both "fallen aways" and converts and contributed to the construction of the Church's foundation in areas where it had not been previously.

As much as possible, bishops and priests urged Pope Pius XI's program of Catholic Action on their parishioners. In 1929 Pius laid out his vision for lay involvement in Church affairs. He called for "elect groups of men. . . who shall act as faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God." The Church must also, he wrote, "have compact companies of pious laymen, who united to the Apostolic Hierarchy by close bonds of charity, will actively aid this by devoting themselves to the manifold works and labors of Catholic Action."¹⁰ Under the careful scrutiny and direction of the hierarchy, that is, Catholic laymen were encouraged to become more involved in Church affairs. The executive secretary of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia told a group of laymen in the early 1950s that "the function of the laity is not to be simply

⁹ Jon W. Anderson, "Catholic Imagination and Inflections of 'Church' in the Contemporary South," pp. 88-89.

¹⁰ Pope Pius XI, *Mens Nostra*, quoted in Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996; originally published 1989), p. 167.

messengers for the clergy, but collaborators with them. A messenger needs no virtue but obedience." Neither obedience nor piety was enough, he continued, "though both are necessary." In addition to doing "what the Church says, it is now vital that we see what the Church is doing, as the Church sees what it is doing." The laity must "first establish ourselves so that we can spread out from ourselves a knowledge of Catholic Truth."¹¹

In both Alabama and Georgia, attempts to unify a disparate population, centralize Church authority, and encourage an active laity began with men. Now was the time for this, as the South's Catholic population increased with the migration of thousands of nonsouthern Catholics to the region and the concomitant growth of new parishes. In September 1945, for example, Msgr. J. R. O'Donoghue, the diocese of Mobile's spiritual director, issued a statement inaugurating a diocesan-wide drive to encourage the establishment of and increased membership in parish Holy Name societies, a Catholic organization of laymen. O'Donoghue pointed to a spiritual malaise following the end of World War II and warned that the "postwar era we are just entering will bring to the Church many crosses." A well-organized group of "devout, sincere, faithful, heroic Catholic laymen" would help the Church bear those crosses.¹² One of those burdens would be returning war veterans, Bishop Toolen feared. A strong parish-based lay organization would ease their transition back into civilian life and incorporate

¹¹ Hugh Kinchley, Untitled Address, [n.d., ca. 1951 - 1953], Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 1, Folder, "The Church Militant in Georgia, by H. Kinchley, 1942," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

¹² "Need For An [sic] United Body of Determined Apostolic Men Cited," *The Catholic Week*, September 14, 1945, p. 1.

them into the daily operations of the local church.¹³ As a demonstration of solidarity, Holy Name Societies and Knights of Columbus councils regularly received Holy Communion in one large group—often the fifth Sunday of a month. Holy Name members or Knights would gather at a pre-arranged meeting place and march the short distance (usually from the school or Knights hall) to the church. Afterwards, the women of the parish would prepare and serve breakfast for the men. In order to encourage participation, moreover, these corporate demonstrations were indulgenced. Holy Name members, for example, received one indulgence for their procession and a second through reception of Holy Communion.¹⁴ In Atlanta during the late 1940s and 1950s, Holy Name men held annual rallies on the campus of Marist College. In 1947, for example, participants heard “a grand sermon [that] emphasized the urgent need of Christian men to counteract the insidious propaganda against Church and Nation. A true Holy Name man is a good citizen and will always support lawful authority. There can be no doubt of their patriotism.”¹⁵

The evidence that exists for this period in Alabama and Georgia is primarily prescriptive literature, so the fact that the laity were encouraged to become more active does not necessarily mean that they always followed the lead of bishops and priests.

¹³ From Bishop Toolen to My dearly beloved Priests and People, printed in *The Catholic Week*, September 7, 1945, p. 1.

¹⁴ “His Excellency, Bishop Toolen to Address K.C. Breakfast,” *The Catholic Week*, January 28, 1949, p. 1; “Birmingham K. of C. Will Receive Communion Sunday,” *The Catholic Week*, January 28, 1949, p. 3; “Bishop Toolen Challenges Knights of Columbus To United Catholic Action,” *The Catholic Week*, February 4, 1949, p. 2; “Large Turnout Of Knights At Blessed Sacrament Sunday,” *The Catholic Week*, November 5, 1949, p. 3; “Holy Name Notes,” *The Catholic Week*, February 18, 1950, p. 5.

¹⁵ “Atlanta Holy Name Rally,” *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, December 1947, p. 12. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

But the doings of the laity can be elusive. Historians must make the most of the meager sources available. At the bishop's urging, the laity did engage in programs along the lines of Catholic Action as prescribed by Pope Pius XI. Lay associations grew slowly, however. Just because the bishop called for their creation did not mean that all parishes immediately complied. From 1944 to 1945, Holy Name membership in Alabama increased by some three thousand members. But in 1948 the Right Reverend Msgr. Walter Royer, Mobile diocesan Holy Name Director, still chastised parishes for not following Toolen's instructions.¹⁶

Toolen also established annual diocesan-wide rallies that brought the disparate Catholic population together in prominent displays of religious pride. Critics might respond that these spiritual activities were only imposed by the bishop and should not be taken as indicative of lay beliefs. But the relationship between hierarchy, clergy, and laity holds the keys to historical significance. Although it is virtually impossible to determine precisely what the laity thought about the bishop's prescription for a stronger Catholic identity, they did participate, often in surprisingly large numbers. Some years as many as twenty or twenty-five thousand marched in Mobile's annual Christ the King celebration. And in Atlanta, five hundred or so men (from six different parishes) marched in annual Holy Name rallies. Approximately that number of women and children gathered to watch. With their participation, the laity accepted these rallies and devotions and made them their own.

¹⁶ From Toolen to My dearly beloved Priests and People, printed in *The Catholic Week*, February 23, 1945, p. 1; Rt. Rev. Walter Royer, Holy Name Convention Sermon, *The Catholic Week*, October 8, 1948, p. 4.

In 1931 Bishop Toolen instituted the public Christ the King celebration "as an outward demonstration of faith."¹⁷ This was another example of the local hierarchy calling for concerted Catholic Action. In 1925 Pope Pius XI had used the image of Christ as King to emphasize the importance of authority and orthodoxy in countering the social unrest of the early twentieth century.¹⁸ Pius worried about "the plague of anti-clericalism, its errors and impious activities" that characterized the early twentieth century, and he expressed concern over the "decline of public authority, and the lack of respect for the same." He proclaimed that all humans were "under the dominion of Christ," who alone could bring the salvation of society. Any sovereign or national leader who hoped to preserve his authority and increase his country's prosperity, the pope warned, "will not neglect the public duty of reverence and obedience to the rule of Christ." Pius, therefore, instituted an annual feast day in honor of Christ the King. He reasoned that liturgical festivals such as the feast of Christ the King were effective means of encouraging the faithful "when they were attacked by insidious heresies, when they needed to be urged to the pious consideration of some mystery of faith." The pope hoped that such an annual celebration, furthermore, would remind nations--and the faithful--of their obligations to the teachings of the Church.¹⁹

Toolen reasoned that such a public demonstration of faith would rally Alabama Catholics and reinforce their commitment to the Church. The celebration would lend

¹⁷ "20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 1.

¹⁸ Chinnici, *Living Stones*, p. 168.

¹⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, December 11, 1925; reprinted in Claudia Carlen, I.H.M., ed. *The Papal Encyclicals, 1903-1939* ([Wilmington, NC]: McGrath, 1981), quotations on pp. 276, 274, 275.

cohesion to a diocese spread thinly across Alabama and northwest Florida, and bring the Church more fully into the lives of the laity and society at large. Celebrations of the Feast of Christ the King on this scale were uncommon elsewhere in the United States, and their popularity in Alabama reveals certain characteristics of the Catholic Church at mid-century. The Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta lacked anything to rival Christ the King celebrations and had to be content with smaller rallies and annual St. Patrick's Day parades. But Georgia's Holy Name rallies echoed some of the same themes and served similar purposes as Alabama's Christ the King demonstrations.²⁰

Alabama's Christ the King observances almost always centered on themes of anti-communism and patriotism and the deleterious impact of modern secular society. But they also outline how Alabama's Catholics viewed the role of the Church in their lives and the shape of southern Catholic spirituality at mid-century. Such public demonstrations may at first seem out of place in such a Protestant--and potentially hostile--environment, but the celebrations were instances of Alabama's Catholics asserting their right to belong in southern society, even as they instructed laity how to be good Christians. Where the annual events took place was significant as well. Mobile's was the most prominent, and the largest number of the state's Catholics attended that event. Tens of thousands paraded through downtown Mobile and congregated in the public square. In Birmingham, Pensacola, and Florence, crowds of several thousands

²⁰ See, for example, *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, December 1946, pp. 12-15; "Knights of Columbus - Atlanta Columbus Day Program," *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, October 1952, pp. 8-9; "St. Patrick's Day," *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, March 1947, pp. 25-27; "Fifty Thousand Atlantans Honored St. Patrick on March 17th," *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, May 1956, p. 13. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

gathered in local stadiums. None of these public facilities was the exclusive realm of Catholics; but on that one particular Sunday afternoon in October Catholics claimed them as local arenas of the sacred. They consecrated, however temporarily, public facilities and used them to connect themselves to a much larger sacred world. By taking part in such public celebrations, Catholics in Alabama intimately associated themselves with Roman Catholicism. Their participation in a distinctively Catholic ceremony distinguished them from other southerners.²¹

The image of Jesus as a monarch reigning over his church suggests the hierarchical nature of Catholicism at mid-century. There was a power structure in place that the laity were expected to recognize. This referred not only to the authority of the Church, with Rome and the Pope at the head and the laity at the foot. The image of Christ as monarch ruling over the Church also reveals attitudes about the nature of Catholicism itself. When local Catholics participated in the Sunday afternoon parades and ceremonies, they were affirming the hierarchy and orthodoxy that their Church represented. Bishop Toolen's motives may have been purer than this interpretation will suggest. But Christ the King celebrations were attempts to impose unity outward from a common center. They sought to make Alabama Catholics good Catholics, who were defined as those who supported—even acquiesced to—the Church's authority as represented by priests, bishops, and ultimately Rome itself. The Church's authority would become problematic in a few years, as racial justice became a moral issue and left

²¹ On the creation of public sacred space, see Chidester and Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space*. For a different, more traditional view, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Translated by Willard R. Trask (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), pp. 20–65.

white southern Catholics in an awkward position. Most Church leaders and official teaching supported integration, but many white southern Catholics sought to disregard the racial justice doctrines, or at least ignore their implications for segregation.

Besides the Church bureaucracy's authority, Toolen referred as well to a "hierarchy of values that must be observed by nations and individuals." Things of God took precedent over "material values."²² Similarly, Father Paul, a Benedictine priest addressing the 1945 Birmingham Christ the King crowd, asserted that Christ was "King and Lord and Master of this world." As such, "we as his subjects owe Him the duties of obedience, loyalty and reverence. Every ruler, even the most benevolent, must exact fulfillment of these duties."²³ The way to satisfy those duties and properly honor Christ the King was through careful obedience, seeking God and bringing him "into our everyday lives."²⁴ Observant Catholics would accomplish that in part with "frequent reception of Holy Communion and prayer."²⁵

In addition to the mass itself, the central component of each Christ the King service was the Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.²⁶ Catholics

²² "Thanksgiving And Lasting Peace Theme Of Mobile Christ The King Celebration: 18,000 To Attend," *The Catholic Week*, October 5, 1945, p. 2.

²³ "Father Paul, O.S.B., Speaking At B'ham Christ The King Celebration, Outlined Duties of Catholics to Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 6.

²⁴ "Feast of Christ The King Celebrated In Pensacola," *The Catholic Week*, November 12, 1948, p. 5; "Father Paul, O.S.B., Speaking At B'ham Christ The King Celebration, Outlined Duties of Catholics to Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 6.

²⁵ "St. Andrew's Parish Observes Feast of Christ The King With High Mass," *The Catholic Week*, November 4, 1950, p. 6.

²⁶ See, for example, "20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 1; "Father Donnelly To Make Address At Pensacola Christ The King Rally," *The Catholic Week*,

believe that the “body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ . . . are truly and substantially present” in the Holy Eucharist.²⁷ Blessed Sacrament devotion and the veneration of the real presence date back to the twelfth century and had been a part of American devotional practice since colonial times. The doctrine of transubstantiation separates Catholics and Protestants more than any other issue, and in the nineteenth century it took on increasing significance for Catholic spiritual life and community identity. As Ann Taves has argued, the Blessed Sacrament and “the Protestant Bible, individually interpreted . . . were thus competing devotional symbols.” Both defined the boundaries of their respective communities. In historian Joseph Chinnici’s words, Christ’s presence in the Eucharist provided Catholicism “with social identity in a Protestant world.”²⁸ Catholics in the South, faced with the rapid urbanization and industrial growth amidst the changing shape of American society, took solace in the knowledge that Christ remained a stabilizing spiritual force and that his presence could be assured in their religious services.

Alabama’s Christ the King celebrations were an interesting mix of patriotism and spirituality that reiterated the southern Catholic eagerness to identify with American society. That identification came, however, with an important qualification. Because of increasing secularism and materialism, American culture had grown corrupt. Only Catholicism provided the spiritual and moral values to redeem the nation. In 1945 the

October 29, 1948, p. 7; “Christ’s Kingship Over Mankind Described At Birmingham Rally,” *The Catholic Week*, November 4, 1950, p. 3.

²⁷ Robert C. Broderick, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Revised and Updated Edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p. 198; see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), pp. 346-347.

primary concern was the immediate post-World War II society and the fate of American democracy and freedom. Over the course of the late 1940s and the 1950s, the emphasis shifted gradually from the war to the adverse influence of communism and concerns over increasing wealth and materialism. Each year's demonstrations summoned Alabama's Catholics to measure their devotion to Christ and the accommodations they had made with modern society. The format of the ceremonies varied little from year to year. Christ the King became an annual diocesan event that remained popular well into the 1960s. (It continues today, but on a much smaller scale.) Its parades and spectacle made the state's Catholic population unmistakably conspicuous, as did its message.

When the diocesan Holy Name Society made plans for the 1945 Christ the King celebration, it announced that the festivities would serve as thanksgiving for the end to World War II. In addition, the state's Catholics would be expected to pray for "a just and lasting peace through Christ the King."²⁹ Organizers expected eighteen thousand to attend in Mobile, but an estimated twenty thousand showed up to form a "two-mile-long parade of parishioners and school children."³⁰ The region's laity assembled according to parish or the group with whom they would march beginning at 2:00, Sunday afternoon, October 28. A city police escort, followed closely by color guards, a cross bearer, and the bishop led parishioners, parochial school children, and some twenty marching bands through downtown Mobile to Bienville Square. Similar but much

²⁸ Taves, *The Household of Faith*, pp. 30-32, 126-127; Chinnici, *Living Stones*, pp. 68, 78.

²⁹ "Thanksgiving and Lasting Peace Theme Of Mobile Christ The King Celebration: 18,000 To Attend," *The Catholic Week*, October 5, 1945, p. 2; see also, "Mobile Holy Name Plans To Celebrate Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, September 14, 1945, p. 2.

smaller demonstrations occurred in Birmingham and Pensacola on the same day, while in Florence approximately thirty-five hundred (they expected sixty-five hundred) simply gathered (with no parade) in the Coffee County High School football stadium.³¹

According to *The Catholic Week* coverage of the 1945 program, the “blessing of two service flags—one containing a star for each man from the Mobile diocese who fought in World War II and the other containing a star for each man or woman who paid the supreme sacrifice—was one of the most impressive parts of the religious section of the program.” Archbishop Toolen praised the worshipers’ “loyalty to Christ and loyalty to your country” through their participation in that day’s ceremony. He also told them that “true religion and true patriotism always go hand in hand,” and loving one’s country meant loving God first.³² Rev. Walter Royer told the Mobile crowd that it had been God’s will that the Allies, under the inspired leadership of the United States, would defeat the Axis powers. Since victory had been divine will and America had been blessed by God, Royer argued, then Americans should not turn from him. They must dedicate their nation to Christ the King, “if we believe that our country is ‘God’s

³⁰ “20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King,” *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 1.

³¹ “Feast Of Christ The King: Diocese Of Mobile Will Pay Tribute To Christ The King,” *The Catholic Week*, October 26, 1945, pp. 1, 2; “20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King,” *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 1; “Scenes From Mobile Christ The King Celebration,” *The Catholic Week*, November 9, 1945, p. 2; “Florence Christ The King Services Draw Large Crowd,” *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 3.

³² “20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King,” *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 1.

Country'." Americans must be "One people, pledged to the cause of Christ, the King, the Prince of Peace, Who has promised peace only to men of 'good-will.'"33

Although the specter of World War II hovered over the 1945 activities, in later years organizers and speakers continued to echo themes of patriotism and anti-communism. Alabama and Georgia Catholics commonly heard sermons or speeches inviting "loyalty to Christ and loyalty to country" or "spiritual patriotism," wherein "As Catholics . . . we must stand united for God, country and church."³⁴ The 1950 gathering in Mobile's Bienville Square included a sermon equating "the Kingdom of Satan with Joseph Stalin."³⁵ The "Star-Spangled Banner" and the pledge of allegiance to the American flag regularly showed up on the annual programs as well.³⁶ In 1950 *The Catholic Week* compared its Christ the King celebration to that year's Protestant Heritage Day. Instead of the "sermon of hate" that--from a Catholic perspective--characterized the Protestant ceremonies, Catholics presented "sermons of enlightening and uplifting spiritual content, truly Christian in theme and words."³⁷

In the minds of Catholics, communism was merely the logical outcome of a secular society. According to local organizers of the 1947 and 1948 Pensacola rallies,

³³ "'Our Beloved America Faces Its Most Critical Hour' Rev. Walter Royer Tells Thousands Celebrating Christ the King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 7.

³⁴ "Archbishop Stresses Importance of Loyalty to Christ, Nation, At Mobile Christ The King Rally," *The Catholic Week*, November 12, 1955, p. 2; "Archbishop Toolen, Bishop Durick Ask United Stand Among Catholics," *The Catholic Week*, November 5, 1955, p. 2.

³⁵ "Catholics Told Prayer Needed To Save World," *The Catholic Week*, November 4, 1950, p. 2.

³⁶ See, for example, "Father Donnelly To Make Address At Pensacola Christ The King Rally," *The Catholic Week*, October 29, 1948, p. 7.

³⁷ "Heritage Day In Mobile," *The Catholic Week*, November 11, 1950, p. 4.

secularization threatened to promote the spread of communism. Pensacola's Holy Name Union, organizers of the annual Christ the King program, envisioned their October celebration as "an open defiance of the threat of Communism." Public prayer was beneficial, for "certainly God will listen to the prayers of the large aggregation of laity which will be on hand beseeching Him for real, lasting peace."³⁸ Communism was a spiritual problem for Catholics, the equivalent of godless atheism, "materialism," and "secularism." To correct that problem "in these trying times of ungodliness with Communism threatening the world they should welcome this chance to turn out and give expression of the faith that is our nation's hope." As if to emphasize the relationship between America's future and the hope found in Catholicism, Pensacola's 1948 program began with the "Star Spangled Banner" and the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag before moving to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.³⁹ At Birmingham's 1948 rally, the Reverend E. J. Lawlor, the Josephite pastor of Birmingham's Immaculate Conception parish, blamed divorce, "nations distrusting one another", and "people harboring hatred in their hearts" on the fact that most people no longer recognized Christ as King in the increasingly secular postwar world.⁴⁰

In April 1950, moreover, Mobile attorney Vincent Kilborn defended the Catholic Church from Paul Blanshard's attacks in a lengthy address before the National Council of Catholic Women meeting in Montgomery. Blanshard was the most popular anti-

³⁸ "Christ The King Demonstration In Pensacola," *The Catholic Week*, October 24, 1947, p. 1.

³⁹ "Father Donnelly To Make Address At Pensacola Christ The King Rally," *The Catholic Week*, October 29, 1948, p. 7.

Catholic antagonist in the 1940s and 1950s. In Kilborn's summation of Blanshard's agenda, the anti-Catholic journalist believed "that all Catholics are engaged in a giant conspiracy against America. . . . to bring about some sinister seizure of the government by the Church and force the United States to its knees as servants and followers of the Church." According to Kilborn, such charges "are false and a lie of the whole cloth." Kilborn maintained that recent Supreme Court cases upholding the arguments of an atheist against the teaching of religion in public schools violated constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. For those who still doubted Catholicism's commitment to American values, Kilborn offered the Church's impeccable anticommunist credentials as supporting evidence. Communism was "the greatest enemy of America today"; the Catholic Church, by contrast, was the "greatest, single bulwark against communism in our land," the "champions of the cause of freedom, of justice, and the dignity and freedom of man." Leaving no doubt where he and his church stood, Kilborn concluded, "We are Catholics. We are Americans. We are loyal Americans, loyal to our God and loyal to our country."⁴¹

Catholic laypeople in Birmingham shared the belief that anticommunism was the proper spiritual attitude for repairing "spiritual and temporal destruction." In 1950, for example, at the Christ the King celebration worshippers were to pray for the overthrow of Communism. The need was particularly acute in 1950, *The Catholic Week* reported,

⁴⁰ "Bishop Urges All Believers To Work For Restoration Of Christ As King," *The Catholic Week*, October 29, 1948, p. 3.

⁴¹ "Relationship Of Catholicism To America, *The Catholic Week*, May 13, 1950, p. 7.

"because the world is torn apart by the lack of practice of true Christian principles."⁴²

In 1958, Rev. Robert William Ripp, the Marist pastor of Atlanta's Sacred Heart Church, wrote that communism "is a total philosophy which interprets all of reality in terms of Godless materialism." Ripp concluded that the "only thing that can stop Communism is a common, coordinated, universal resurgence of the spiritual forces which Communism strives to annihilate."⁴³ That Ripp and others like him would call for a "resurgence" of proper Christian values reveals a belief that a decline of sorts had occurred.

At least according to Catholic leaders in Alabama and Georgia, immediately following the end of the war America was vulnerable to the evils of moral decay, materialism, and secularization. In 1945 Toolen had warned the school children participating in the Christ the King celebration, according to *The Catholic Week*, never to "allow themselves to be doped by the opium of materialism." He added "that the great curse of our day was indifferentism, lack of zeal for things high and noble, the tendency to compromise sacred principles and appease pagan minded individuals and nations."⁴⁴ For Catholics, the fact that America was in such a compromised position represented a spiritual problem. This type of spiritual reproach was common to religious leaders of all callings, but for mid-twentieth-century Catholic leaders the

⁴² "Christ The King To Be Held In Birmingham Oct. 29," *The Catholic Week*, August 12, 1950. See also, "B'ham Holy Name Union Plans Christ The King Observance," *The Catholic Week*, September 23, 1950, p. 3.

⁴³ Very Rev. R. W. Ripp, S.M., "Communism," *St. Anthony's Catholic News*, November 1958, pp. 18-19. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁴ "20,000 Mobile Catholics Honor Christ The King," *The Catholic Week*, November 2, 1945, p. 2.

situation appeared worse because of the demographic, cultural, and economic changes sweeping the national religious scene.⁴⁵

The situation was so tragic because now succumbing to “materialism” and “secularism” meant becoming like the Protestant mainstream. Faced with such cultural acceptance, some feared, Catholics would certainly lose their uniqueness. In a pamphlet written for African Americans to “counteract all this [Communist] poison,” Atlanta’s Rev. D.J. Corrigan, C.S.R. blamed American slavery and racism on southern Protestantism. In Catholic countries, by contrast, “there is actually no racial prejudice.”⁴⁶ In 1951, furthermore, Savannah’s Msgr. Joseph Moylan worried about the negative influence on Christians of “years of Protestantism, Materialism and Secularism,” all of which combine to create a “watered down” faith.⁴⁷ Moylan’s concerns suggest a degree of Catholic ambivalence over their acceptance into the cultural mainstream. In his mind, there was a direct correlation between the dominant Protestantism and this postwar spiritual crisis.

The accuracy of Father Corrigan’s assessment notwithstanding, it and Moylan’s characterization of Protestantism’s centrality to cultural and religious decline reveal at least those leaders’ attitudes about Catholicism’s rapprochement with the mainstream. The laity may not have been aware of the potential dangers, but Moylan, Corrigan, and others like them feared that the Church would lose its spiritual authority to, in the

⁴⁵ On Catholic compromises with American culture, see Massa, *Catholics and American Culture*.

⁴⁶ “A Message to Negroes,” *St. Anthony’s Catholic News*, March 1947, p. 52. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

Savannah vicar general's words, a "watered down" generic faith.⁴⁸ Indeed, Corrigan and Moylan's fears were not unfounded. By mid-century, southern Protestantism had made its peace with the region's cultural modernism. Both accepted the primacy of individual experience and eschewed meaningful social reform. According to Daniel Joseph Singal, southern modernists "did not expect to find epistemological certainty; just the opposite. Usually full-fledged relativists, they believed the knowledge was at best a shifting affair."⁴⁹ For southern Catholics, the Protestant majority was not critical enough of this cultural decline.

In the 1950s, speakers at the feast of Christ the King expressed concern over the potential dangers of the decade's prosperity and the temptations of material comfort. In 1955 Father Frank Giri addressed more than five thousand Catholics at the outdoor Birmingham rally. Giri challenged his listeners to identify with Christ's "conquest of these three evils, love of riches, pride and self-indulgence." Christ overcame the love of riches "when He despised wealth and chose to be born in poverty" and to live in poverty. Christ had also conquered self-indulgence, "the human passionate quest for pleasure." Giri encouraged Birmingham's Catholics to emulate Christ's example.⁵⁰ A

⁴⁷ From Moylan to Kinchley, January 26, 1951, Box FB-5, Catholic Laymen's Association, 1950-1957, Folder, "Catholic Laymen's Association, 1951-1952," Archives of the Diocese of Savannah, GA.

⁴⁸ Mark S. Massa recently argued that is precisely what happened to American Catholics in the middle of the twentieth century. See *idem*, *Catholics and American Culture*.

⁴⁹ Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 261; Bartley, *The New South*, pp. 267-273.

⁵⁰ "Over 5,000 Hear Father Giri Speak Of The Loyalty Inspired By The Majesty Of Jesus Christ," *The Catholic Week*, November 12, 1955, p. 3.

year later Archbishop Toolen acknowledged that no other nation had been "granted blessings as we have in America." This prosperity, however, could be a curse rather than a blessing. He warned the Mobile crowd "against tendencies toward secularism, materialism and the love of wealth."⁵¹ In 1958 Toolen invited his audience to counter those temptations with a "life of poverty and sacrifice," two concepts that secular society neglected.⁵² Observance of the tenets of Catholicism, then, counteracted the decline of modern America. Indeed, a Birmingham Josephite priest, Anthony A. Keil, reminded the 1958 Christ the King crowd at Rickwood Field that "the throne of Christ the King is now the Altar of the Catholic Church."⁵³

The spirituality encouraged by the Christ the King observances was a masculine one. The Holy Name Society was an association of Catholic laymen founded in the thirteenth century, whose purpose was promoting the spiritual progress of its members and reverence for the name of Jesus.⁵⁴ The diocesan Holy Name Society assumed responsibility for organizing the annual celebration of Christ the King. Father D. P. Harnett, pastor of Mobile's St. Catherine's Church, wrote in 1945 the Holy Name "has developed a virile, virtuous Catholic manhood, [and] its members have always been the

⁵¹ "'The 20th Century Has Shown Man Is Inadequate Without God,'" *The Catholic Week*, November 9, 1956, p. 2.

⁵² "Christ Has Never Asked Us To Do What He Had Not Done Himself," *The Catholic Week*, November 7, 1958, p. 2.

⁵³ "Sacrifice Separates True Love From Sentimentality, Priest Says," *The Catholic Week*, October 31, 1958, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Broderick, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Revised and Updated Edition, p. 268.

shock troops of Christianity," fighting for the rights of God and country.⁵⁵ Christ the King programs regularly included men reciting the Holy Name pledge, and members used the special day to recruit new members and encourage those parishes that did not have one to begin their own chapter.

Such a masculine expression of spirituality stands in sharp contrast to the period's Marian devotions. Veneration of the Virgin Mary dates back centuries, as laymen incorporated her image into their popular devotions even before the medieval period. In 1854 Pope Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception, the doctrine that Mary was born without the stain of original sin, and the nineteenth century proved to be a period of strong Marian devotion. The Church approved at least four apparition sites in the nineteenth century, and both national and international cults sprang up to honor each. The Mary of that romantic period "represented a privatized world of beauty and harmony far removed from the crass world of everyday life."⁵⁶ In the two decades before the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, Marian devotions peaked. In the decade following the end of World War II, the faithful reported more than one hundred Marian apparitions in Europe and the United States. Following World War II, veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary (especially as she was revealed through her apparition at Fatima) came to be closely associated with anticommunism and efforts to

⁵⁵ "A Virtuous, Vigorous Christian Manhood Needed. Renew Society," *The Catholic Week*, September 28, 1945, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *The Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, p. 638; Thomas A. Kselman and Steven Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States," *Catholic Historical Review* 72 (July 1986): 403-424; for the nineteenth century, also see Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith*, pp. 36-39, 107-111.

build up the family. Indeed, those two themes were not unrelated in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁷

The veneration of Mary in the 1940s and 1950s served some of the same purposes for white southern Catholics as the Christ the King celebrations. Mary was a figure that Protestants did not honor the same way Catholics did, and her prominence in Catholic doctrine was often the target of Protestant attack. Catholics worldwide, moreover, honored the mother of Jesus. So devotion to the Virgin was yet another element of the construction of a Roman Catholic identity among southern Catholics. That is to say, to venerate the Virgin in any of her many manifestations was to link Catholics in Alabama and Georgia to doctrines and spiritual practices that transcended their southern experience. In 1950 Birmingham Catholics unveiled a new statue of the Madonna and child at St. Paul's chapel of John Carroll High School. At the dedication ceremony, Bishop Toolen claimed the new statue symbolized "the great progress of the Catholic Church in the Birmingham area. It is a monument to the love, devotion, loyalty and zeal of" the local Catholics.⁵⁸ Marian devotions also connected the faithful to larger themes in American history at mid-century. Marian piety sounded a distinct anticommunist note in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Catholics prayed fervently for the conversion of Russia to Christianity, a directive issued by the 1917 Marian apparition at Fatima, Portugal. In 1936 the last surviving visionary of Fatima wrote her account of the apparition's message to the children in 1917. According to Sister Lucia,

⁵⁷ Kselman and Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States."

⁵⁸ "City of Birmingham Is Dedicated To Mary," *The Catholic Week*, February 18, 1950, p. 1.

Mary called for prayer and reception of communion on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, which, she claimed, would lead to the conversion of Russia. This revised message reached American audiences in the 1940s, and the cult of Fatima assumed increasing popularity.⁵⁹ Mary also represented the 1950s feminine ideal, the guardian of family morality in an age of uncertainty and threat of nuclear war.⁶⁰ Finally, Catholic accounts of Alabama rallies and demonstrations in honor of Mary noted the inclusion of non-Catholics in the ceremonies, indicating at least the Catholic eagerness to demonstrate their own spiritual cause also had ramifications beyond their own Church.

The Catholic Church dedicated the month of May to honoring the Virgin Mary, and one of the most popular devotions was the annual May Day celebration. In 1945 an editorial in *The Catholic Week* pointed to the denominational divide over Mariology. The editorial conceded that non-Christians may have good reason for rejecting Mary ("they resent her role in bringing Christ into the world"), but non-Catholic Christians were a different story. "There was a time," the newspaper recalled, "not too far distant, when many Christian sects, seemed to be of the opinion that the best way to show their love for Christ, was to show hatred for His Mother." That explicit "violent opposition" no longer existed, but "it has been supplanted by an insulting silent contempt." Not for Catholics, however, who "will ever uphold the honor and dignity of Mary. Faced with the rejection of the world and the indifference of Christians, the Church cries even

⁵⁹ Kselman and Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States," p. 409.

⁶⁰ On the Cold War's effect on family life, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1988).

louder the praises of this the most beautiful of God's creatures."⁶¹ Farewell to May or May Day celebrations unified Catholics in the cities where they were held. In Montgomery, for example, the annual celebration "is for the purpose of uniting all Catholic organizations and all Catholics of the city in homage to the Mother of God."⁶² In Mobile the 1945 May Day rally was one of the few instances each year that the Visitation Convent opened its doors to the general public. Groups from all over the city gathered at the convent "in their annual act of homage to their Queen."⁶³

In the 1940s and early 1950s, however, what Mary stood for in Catholic eyes could also unite Catholics and Protestants instead of dividing them. In the postwar world, Russia and communism provided a greater common enemy for both Protestants and Catholics. According to journalist Charles Morris, in the eyes of Catholics, "Soviet communism and Stalin . . . were the spawn of the devil, explicitly dedicated to subverting Christianity throughout the world, to murdering the consecrated servants of God, and to rooting out religion wherever they came to power." For Catholics, then, communism was a spiritual threat more than it was a political or foreign policy danger. Given the seriousness and potential peril of the postwar situation, Morris concluded, "it was not at all extraordinary that the Blessed Mother herself should come to Earth to warn her people."⁶⁴

⁶¹ "May – Mary's Month," *The Catholic Week*, May 4, 1945, p. 4.

⁶² "Montgomery Pays Homage To B.V.M.," *The Catholic Week*, May 25, 1945, p. 2; see also "Montgomery Plans Farewell To May To Honor B.V.M.," *The Catholic Week*, May 18, 1945, p. 7.

⁶³ "Students In Mobile To Observe May Day," *The Catholic Week*, May 11, 1945, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Morris, *American Catholic*, p. 229.

Southern Catholics shared those spiritual concerns. Mobile, Montgomery, Birmingham, Pensacola, and Atlanta all had their own Marian activities, whose purpose almost invariably was "beseeching the intercession of the Queen of Peace for world peace and the conversion of Russia." In 1948, twenty-five thousand men, women, and children participated in the Mary rallies in the four Alabama cities, once again marking out sacred space in ways similar to the Christ the King celebrations. Ten thousand crowded into Mobile's Hartwell Field, seven thousand into Birmingham's Rickwood Park, three thousand into Montgomery's Cramton Bowl, and five thousand into Pensacola's Legion Field. The programs for the four demonstrations varied little. There was "a Holy Hour with procession," crowning of a statue of the Virgin Mary, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, saying of the rosary and prayers for peace, "prayers for the dedication of the Diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," a sermon, and an address.⁶⁵

The program's purpose and the speakers' messages varied little as well. Alabama joined other American Catholics in denouncing increasing secularization and "the menace of atheistic communism," which, according to Msgr. F. J. McCormack, pastor of St. Anthony's parish, Ensley, Alabama, "aims at upsetting the social order and undermining civilization [and] strips man of his liberties and freedoms, robs him of his human personality and leaves no room for God anywhere." Similarly, the Rev. Francis Foley, administrator of Birmingham's St. Paul's Church, told five thousand Pensacola residents that "the pernicious error of atheistic doctrine as propounded by the

⁶⁵ "Spiritual Crusade Urged By Bishop Toolen At May Day Demonstrations," *The Catholic Week*, May 14, 1948, p. 1.

Communists, and as found in every corner of the globe, is a power in our day which is taking the people from God."⁶⁶ In 1950, in front of five thousand gathered in Birmingham's Rickwood Field, the Rev. James V. Loughlin, associate editor of *The Catholic Week*, compared Communism to cancer that "has malignantly eaten into the very vitals of Europe and Asia." Man had placed himself on an equal footing with God and replaced "God's law and His tenets" with "the will of man." Communism was but one example of a universal abandonment of the divine. America's divorce and crime rates and widespread practice of birth control meant that this nation had "out-Sodommed Sodom and gone beyond Gommora [*sic*]."⁶⁷

Such jeremiads have a long history in the American religious tradition, but that fact should not mean that the historian cannot take them seriously. Indeed, for twentieth-century American Catholics the postwar world had undergone tremendous, unsettling change. American society appeared increasingly unstable, and their recent movement up the social ladder was not yet secure. For them, communism, secularization, divorce and family problems were all spiritual dilemmas that required spiritual solutions. Speaking in 1948 to Montgomery's May Day demonstration, the Jesuit Rev. John Cronin of Mobile's Spring Hill College urged his audience to "work successfully to make Christianity a vital part of life." Msgr. F. J. McCormack called for a "sincere renewal in public and private of our Christian faith."⁶⁸ Speakers at May Day

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ "5000 Crowd Rickwood Field In Honor Of Mother Of God," *The Catholic Week*, May 27, 1950, p. 4.

⁶⁸ "Spiritual Crusade Urged By Bishop Toolen At May Day Demonstrations," *The Catholic Week*, May 14, 1948, p. 1.

rallies regularly echoed the theme that the only spiritual solutions came through the Virgin Mary. *The Catholic Week's* Father Loughlin argued that the "answer is not at the tables of the U.N. It is at Cana in Galilee, at Fatima in Portugal. . . . All must go to Mary, for where Mary is stands Christ, where Christ stands, lie forgiveness and salvation."⁶⁹

In December 1947 a statue of Our Lady of Fatima—a replica of one at the shrine of Cova da Iria, Portugal—began its American journey in Buffalo, New York. The statue was one of two replicas being taken from diocese to diocese around the world. The second one moved westward across Europe, and the plan was for the two to reach opposite borders of Russia, bringing with them the prayers and spiritual conviction of millions of anticommunists around the globe. Some two hundred thousand devotees visited the "Pilgrim Virgin" during its three-day stay in Buffalo. The statue's pilgrimage brought it to Alabama in February 1948, where the four major cities of the diocese took turns hosting it. St. Paul's Church in Birmingham was the first stop on the tour. After two days there, a motorcade of Mobile diocesan priests and officials escorted the Pilgrim Virgin to Montgomery. It arrived in Mobile on February 19, after opportunities for veneration in Montgomery and Pensacola.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ "5000 Crowd Rickwood Field In Honor Of Mother Of God," *The Catholic Week*, May 27, 1950, p. 4. In a biblical reference important to Catholics in support of Mary's prominence vis-à-vis Jesus, Cana was where Jesus turned water into wine after his mother told servants to do whatever her son said. For other examples besides May Day celebrations, see "The American Home," *The Catholic Week*, May 4, 1945, p. 4; "If Thou Hadst Known . . .," *The Catholic Week*, February 6, 1948, p. 4; "Catholic Men Urged To Pray and Do Penance To Convert Russia," *The Catholic Week*, March 26, 1949, p. 2; "Are You Heeding Fatima?" *The Catholic Week*, February 6, 1948, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Kselman and Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States," p. 411; "Diocese of Mobile To Pay Tribute To Fatima Statue, Famed 'Pilgrim Virgin,'" *The Catholic Week*, February 6, 1948, p. 1; "Pilgrim Virgin To Remain In Mobile Diocese Two Weeks," *The Catholic Week*, February 13, 1948, p.

At least according to diocesan officials, the tour was an unqualified success. One estimate placed the number of Alabamans and Floridians who visited the statue at forty-five thousand over the entire week.⁷¹ That figure might be high, but it would be consistent with the popularity of Marian devotions at their peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Regardless of what the actual number was, the Pilgrim Virgin tour provided Alabama Catholics another opportunity to link their cause with that of Catholics worldwide. The Virgin's message was a universal Catholic one, with which Catholics from Mobile to Birmingham could identify. What's more, they believed that what Mary represented in the years after World War II could appeal to more than just Catholics. The news accounts of both May Day celebrations and the Pilgrim Virgin tour regularly mentioned that non-Catholics attended in addition to Catholics. There never appears any indication what percentage of the announced attendance were non-Catholics; indeed, reporters or diocesan officials probably had no idea how many there were. What is significant is the Catholic eagerness to be inclusive. They probably hoped that their inclusiveness would be reciprocated. The problems which devotion to Mary was supposed to solve, moreover, were not specifically Catholic issues. The Catholic subculture still existed, but their demands for acceptance and claims to a public presence were bearing fruit.

1; "Thousands Throng To Venerate 'Pilgrim Virgin' Touring Diocese," *The Catholic Week*, February 20, 1948, p. 1.

⁷¹ "Mobile Holy Name Men To Pray For Peace At 'Holy Hour Of Reparation,'" *The Catholic Week*, March 5, 1948, p. 2.

The appeals to non-Catholics also revealed the contested nature of sacred space. The public arena is necessarily open to competing interests, and Catholics' claim to public space as a sacred Catholic domain was in conflict with Protestant designs on the same public territory.⁷² Indeed, the desire to be inclusive only went so far. Catholics invited non-Catholics to participate, but the services could not be for them. With mass, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and devotion to Virgin Mary, they were explicitly Catholic and by their very nature excluded Protestants. Catholics, however, meant their spiritual message for non-Catholics and Catholics alike. They indicated what was wrong with the world and why Catholics were the ones whose solution other Americans should follow.

Both Christ the King and May Day celebrations declined in popularity in the 1960s, as did examples of anti-Catholicism. In 1964, for example, seven thousand Mobilians attended the May Day rally (down from ten thousand in 1948), and that same year Pensacola held its rally in the high school gym instead of the larger Legion Field. Speakers still claimed that devotion to the Virgin was of critical spiritual importance, and for Catholic leaders Mary remained the symbol of feminine purity and guardian of the home. But their rhetoric had lost the fire of the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁷³

⁷² On the contested nature of sacred space, see Chidester and Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space*, p. 16.

⁷³ "Archbishop Will Preside At Mary's Day Rally, May 10th," *The Catholic Week*, May 1, 1964, p. 2; "Annual Celebration Honoring Mary To Be Held On May 10th," *The Catholic Week*, May 1, 1964, p. 4; "Catholic Women Reminded Of Dignity Conferred On Them Through Bl. Virgin," *The Catholic Week*, May 8, 1964, p. 8; "'Love Mary; Pray For Peace' Says Archbishop, Fr. Adams," *The Catholic Week*, May 15, 1964, p. 2. On the decline of devotionism in Pittsburgh, see Kelly, "Suburbanization and the Decline of Catholic Public Ritual in Pittsburgh"; and Kelly and Kelly, "Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Gender Roles, and the Decline of Devotional Catholicism."

Similarly, by the late 1960s Christ the King celebrations in Mobile had moved to the Municipal Auditorium, with either a much smaller procession or none at all.⁷⁴ There were several reasons for this change. By the 1960s and 1970s, Catholics were more readily accepted in a new pluralist modern South and there was no longer the need to assert their right to belong in southern society.

By that time, then, Catholics had become less of a "group apart" than they had been in the 1940s and 1950s. As the South underwent its most radical transformation ever, Catholics took advantage of increasing pluralism to ease their way into social and cultural acceptance. They were incorporated into southern society not because they had compromised their belief system, but because their beliefs had become increasingly relevant. Indeed, in 1950 the superintendent of parochial schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Rev. Thomas J. Quigley, was the keynote speaker at Birmingham's annual Toy Bowl banquet. Quigley told his audience of 250 that "just as the South was the cradle of this democracy, it now must become its shelter and haven against the atheism and materialism which threatens [*sic*] us." Because it was more "religious-minded and more spiritual than any other region," the South was in the best position to lead the struggle to save American democracy from secularism. It went without saying at that banquet that the South's Catholics were to be the region's frontline in the battle.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See, for example, "Mobile To Celebrate Christ The King Feast On Oct. 25," *The Catholic Week*, October 16, 1964, p. 2; "Great Day Coming," *The Catholic Week*, November 17, 1972, p. 3; and "41st Annual Christ The King Celebration," *The Catholic Week*, November 16, 1973, p. 1.

⁷⁵ "The South, Once The Cradle Of American Democracy, Must Now Be Its Shelter, Haven," *The Catholic Week*, November 11, 1950, p. 1.

For white southerners, the 1950s and the advent of the modern civil rights movement brought even more evidence of social and cultural decline. They believed their social order to be under attack, and race once again became the linchpin of southern identity. The southern Catholic Church divided over the civil rights movement. Most white Catholics supported segregation and claimed that aspect of the region's identity as well. Support for the racial status quo confirmed their insider status. Like white Protestants, white Catholics refused to acknowledge the immorality of the South's social system and preferred that the Church acquiesce to accepted racial norms. But a minority of Alabama and Georgia's Catholics opposed segregation and supported the civil rights movement. These Catholics were looked upon with suspicion and maintained their outsider status in their church and in southern society in general.

CHAPTER 4
"THE PLACE FOR THE SOUTHERN LIBERAL IS IN THE SOUTH":
ALBERT S. FOLEY, CATHOLIC "OUTSIDERS," AND SOUTHERN RACE
RELATIONS

Archbishop Toolen, the imperious ruler of the Church in Alabama and west Florida from 1927 until his retirement in 1969, concentrated his administration's efforts on church growth and on such public demonstrations as Christ the King. These goals helped to solidify central control over the Alabama Church. He only enjoyed limited success, however, in attempts to "bring our Holy Faith to our Negro people."¹ By 1965 Toolen estimated that there were only 18,000 black Catholics in his diocese. The archbishop could not claim all the credit for even this small number. Religious orders like the Josephites, Edmundities, and the Society of African Missions were primarily responsible for the South's Negro Apostolate. Despite Toolen's protestations to the contrary, segregation characterized race relations within the Church well into the 1960s.² Religious orders devoted to work among African Americans certainly encouraged black entrance into the Catholic Church, but they also helped the Church to maintain the racial status quo. Because of their association with the region's African

¹ Pastoral letter from Toolen to priests and people of diocese, February 22, 1965. Archbishop Thomas J. Toolen papers, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Mobile, AL.

² For more on segregation in the Catholic Church, see Labbe, *Jim Crow Comes to Church*; and Osborne, *The Segregated Covenant*.

Americans, members of these religious orders remained outside the mainstream of the southern Catholic Church. The majority of white Catholics moved from outsider to social and cultural insider as a result of their support for segregation. So the minority of white Catholics who favored integration remained on the margins.

Father Albert S. Foley, a Jesuit, was not a member of the religious orders devoted exclusively to the Negro apostolate. Nevertheless, despite being a Louisiana native who had been steeped in the South's racial tradition, he came to symbolize, in the mind of white southerners, the evil outside agitator. Through example and his own writings and teachings, Foley advocated equal rights for African Americans. He founded and supported ecumenical groups devoted to human rights and waged a running battle with the Ku Klux Klan. A white man, he betrayed the white cause. This made him a threat to white southern society. The fact that he was a priest made the situation worse. In the minds of the white Protestant South, Foley also betrayed the Christianity that had sustained the South's social order. From Foley's perspective, however, he was an insider who could bring the South out of its troubled, racist past. He was not one to back down from a fight or to flee during rough times. "I was able to maintain, as I still hold," he recalled in his unpublished memoirs, "that the place for the Southern liberal is in the South where the action is, instead of holed up in the safety of the anonymous big cities, writing books about the South and enjoying absentee royalties."³ Father Albert

³ Albert S. Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists," unpublished memoirs in the possession of Joan Sage, Mobile, AL, p. 2. There are two extant versions of Foley's memoirs, both with similar titles. This one is in the possession of Ms. Sage. The other is in the archives of Spring Hill College and is entitled, simply, "In the Shadow of the White Camellias." There is some overlap, but it is possible that these were intended as two volumes (as opposed to two separate versions) of the same memoir. To avoid confusion, in addition to the title, I will refer to each volume

Foley could be said to symbolize the progress made by the Church at large in race relations following the end of World War II. He remained in the minority, however, within the southern Catholic Church.

Because they were "outsiders," the influence of reformers like Foley and the Josephites, Edmundites, and Society of African Missions on the Church's and the South's racial status quo was ambiguous. On the one hand, they--particularly the religious orders--enabled the Catholic Church to reach out to African Americans and incorporate them into the Church. Outsiders were the only ones with the liberty to openly advocate integration and black equality.⁴ They had to worry less about the image of the local church in the eyes of whites. Their financial support came primarily from northern parishes. As a result, local whites could not express their disapproval by withholding regular donations, as they could in response to diocesan priests and bishops who got out of line. In one sense, religious orders provided the community orientation that helped to lay the foundation for black activism in the 1960s, particularly in Mobile and Selma. In addition, Foley maintained ecumenical connections that placed him in regular contact with other opponents of segregation. In that capacity, he prefigured the next generation of Church organization and authority that would come of age with the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.

On the other hand, because white outsiders were in charge of the southern Church's African-American apostolate, this arrangement allowed other southern whites

according to who has possession of it. That is, each reference will include either Sage version or Spring Hill version.

⁴ See, for example, Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet*.

to distance themselves from black Catholics and further marginalize African Americans and those who ministered to them. Other white southerners, therefore, were relieved of any moral responsibility in that regard. The Catholic Church's position on civil rights in the 1950s also reveals a new ambivalence about the source of its authority. The gradual awareness of racism and segregation as moral issues introduced to Catholics what, for all practical purposes, was a new concept. For whites, segregation had been an acceptable component of the Catholic Church's mission in the South. But now arguments for spiritual equality before the Church introduced a moral authority in tension with traditional practices. Spiritual equality and the denial of racial superiority within the Mystical Body of Christ would be validated by the convergence of the Second Vatican Council and the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Having outsiders responsible for the black apostolate in the 1950s, however, effectively achieved both spiritual equality and southern segregation goals. It also allowed to go unresolved the tension between the hierarchy and orthodoxy of the mid-century Church and the moral authority of some bishops and popes on racial issues.

Within the Catholic Church in the South, African Americans were a minority within a minority.⁵ Like white southerners, blacks were overwhelmingly Protestant, overwhelmingly Baptist. Despite aggressive evangelism efforts by religious orders and a select few secular priests, African Americans remained relatively insignificant in both

⁵ Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis, eds., *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); Albert J. Raboteau, "Minority within a Minority: The History of Black Catholics in America," in *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

the national and southern Catholic Churches. Nevertheless, the southern Church's relationship with the region's black population reveals whites' own ambivalence about their southern identity. On the one hand, racial issues more than any other factors solidified white Catholics' southern identity. For many--if not most--of them, segregation and racism were not moral issues. They were a fact of southern life that had little to do with Christian doctrine. If their belief system had any relationship to the South's racial pattern, they reasoned, it should reinforce segregation, by insuring that boundaries were honored and certain groups of people (primarily blacks) remained in their proper place. On the other hand, a handful of church leaders and marginalized individuals, like Foley, pushed a racial agenda and encouraged Catholic participation in racial and social justice issues. At times this put the Church in an awkward position vis-à-vis mainstream white society. The Church itself never fully resolved this dilemma. The hierarchy and many priests eventually accepted the immorality of racism, but the laity and other priests and a few bishops proved to be reluctant converts.⁶

Given the Catholic emphasis on the universality of their faith, the Church necessarily was biracial, and white Catholics who gave the matter much thought perceived themselves as caretakers of African Americans. Like everyone, white or black, African Americans needed the spiritual direction and salvation through the sacraments that the Catholic Church offered. The fact that spiritual salvation was available to blacks, of course, in no way implied social equality. Instead, many southern

⁶ On the history of slavery and Jim Crow within the southern Catholic Church and the lack of any challenge to the southern status quo, see the essays in Miller and Wakelyn, eds., *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*; Gannon, *Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot*; Labbe, *Jim Crow Comes To Church*; and Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*.

whites believed that the social order—with whites at the top of the racial hierarchy—was divinely ordained, the perfect complement to a Christian communal order. The hierarchical nature of the Church like that evinced in Christ the King celebrations only reinforced that social order. From this perspective, blacks—along with all non-Catholic southern whites—needed the salvation the Church provided, and it was incumbent upon the local bishop to insure that blacks were properly evangelized. Most used religious orders to accomplish this goal, thereby freeing secular diocesan priests to work with whites, who comprised a majority of the Catholic population.⁷

One Birmingham laymen reveals the Catholic ambivalence over racial and social justice versus protection of the region's status quo. William G. Kidd, of Birmingham's St. Paul's parish, told a 1945 Knights of Columbus discussion club that the postwar years promised "a crisis in our interracial relations that may do violence to our social structure." Kidd insisted that Catholics should view the problem "from the viewpoint of Christian justice." At the same time, he echoed historical interpretations popular among northern and southern whites in the 1940s. Kidd bemoaned the "age-long tragedy of exploitation of the Negro race" and the "crimes of enslavement." But, following the

⁷ On religious orders in Alabama and Georgia, see "Passionist Fathers Have Retreat House, 2 Colored Missions," *The Catholic Week*, May 9, 1947, p. 33; "Salvatorian Fathers Conduct Mother Mary Colored Mission At Phenix City," *The Catholic Week*, May 9, 1947, p. 30-F; "Holy Ghost Fathers Have White, Colored Churches," *The Catholic Week*, May 9, 1947, p. 31; "Predominantly Black parishes," 1970. Bishop John L. May Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Mobile, AL; "11 Men's Communities In Diocese," *The Catholic Week*, April 28, 1972, p. 12-B; "Happy Anniversary!" *The Catholic Week*, July 7, 1972, p. 4. For examples of the Edmundites in Alabama, see, "Priest's Appeal Supported," *The Catholic Week*, March 30, 1945, Section 1, p. 4; "Edmundite Fathers Open Mission Building For Colored In Gadsden," *The Catholic Week*, December 9, 1950, p. 3; "All Saints' Church And Playground, Anniston," *The Catholic Week*, October 19, 1945, p. 8. On the Josephites, see Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

conventional interpretation of slavery and Reconstruction, he argued that slaves were well treated and “enjoyed a security not realized since.” Reconstruction, he maintained, had visited upon the white South the curse of carpetbaggers and scalawags, and forced whites to live under “the ignorant brutal rule of the half-savage ex-slave.” Kidd conceded that World War II placed the South in an awkward, contradictory position, refusing to give the Negro “his democratic rights” while “fighting a war ostensibly at least for the preservation of democracy.” Reform was probably around the corner, Kidd allowed, but northerners must not interfere. This was a southern problem, and the “ultimate solution of the problem rests in the hands of Southerners.”⁸

Other speakers and leaders shared Kidd’s appreciation (at least rhetorically) for Catholic social justice doctrines, although in the late 1940s and 1950s very few people were talking openly of integration. In 1948 a priest of the Society of St. Joseph, Rev. Vincent Warren, addressed Mobile’s Catholic Men’s Breakfast Club and issued an appeal for “justice for the Negro race.” In addition, Father Warren pointed out that the main purpose of his own order, the Josephites, was to “help the Negro . . . achieve everlasting life” through reception of the sacraments. Racial justice might be one thing, but Warren was careful not to push his audience of approximately three hundred too far. The “colored people aren’t asking to eat their meals on Government Street,” the main

⁸ “Catholic Layman Looks At Our Inter-racial Problem,” *The Catholic Week*, October 26, 1945, p. 1. For other examples of this sort of ambivalence, see “Priest Urges Mobilians To Learn More of Negro,” *The Catholic Week*, December 21, 1945, p. 9; “Bishop Urges Equal Education For All At Pensacola Deanery Meeting,” *The Catholic Week*, February 11, 1949, p. 7.

thoroughfare into downtown Mobile. But “they realize . . . and we all realize that there are many injustices where colored people are concerned.”⁹

During World War II, a white priest working among Negroes raised at least a few Milledgeville, Georgia, eyebrows and brought condemnation upon the Church by the local white population. In 1942 Monsignor Joseph Cassidy reported to the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta’s Bishop Gerald O’Hara that local residents complained to the police that he was a “spy, conducting a meeting under questionable circumstances, in a vacant house, in the Negro district of town.” One man admitted he was convinced that the priest “transmitted secrets to the enemy” via short-wave radio. Just how a Catholic priest would obtain state secrets from African Americans in Milledgeville, Georgia, is unclear. Nevertheless, whites perceived his missionary work as a threat to the racial status quo and, in Msgr. Cassidy’s words, “a detriment to the cause of the white, instead of an asset.” Hostility to the priest was so intense that he decided to move the Queen of the Apostles Motor Chapel elsewhere in rural Georgia.¹⁰

Despite such open animosity, white Catholic leaders slowly incorporated African-Americans into their church. The North Alabama Missions Band increasingly addressed its efforts toward blacks, and by the 1960s most of the respondents to that group’s summer mission tours were African American. In 1954, for example, the North Alabama Missions annual report recorded 684 Catholics involved in the outreach program. All of those were white. A year later, just less than one third of the mission

⁹ “Appeal Is Made To Give Justice To Negro Race,” *The Catholic Week*, November 26, 1948, p. 2

¹⁰ From Msgr. Joseph Cassidy to Most Rev. Gerald O’Hara, August 7, 1942. Archdiocese History File, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

Catholics in and around Birmingham were black, and within two years they comprised over half. Their proportion of the Catholic mission population varied into the 1960s, until Bishop Toolen reported in 1966 that eleven priests, six seminarians, "and some lay folks" working the summer street preaching apostolate garnered "twelve hundred people who were interested in knowing more about the Catholic Church. . . . by far the greater number of them were our Negro people."¹¹ In 1992 Father Paul Donnelly, a priest working in North Alabama Missions, recalled that by 1965 "the days of proselytizing . . . in white neighborhoods had passed. We concentrated on black neighborhoods." Donnelly acknowledged singing "We Shall Overcome," the familiar civil rights anthem, "to get things going" at mission services.¹²

Perhaps even more surprising than appealing to both blacks and whites in local mission work is the fact that blacks and whites occasionally attended the same parishes in Alabama and Georgia. To be sure, these integrated churches were predominantly white, with the number of African Americans often miniscule. St. Joseph's parish in Dalton, Georgia, for instance, had six blacks in a parish of more than three hundred. At Sacred Heart church in Griffin, Georgia, there were four African Americans out of six hundred, fifteen out of six hundred and fifty at St. Joseph's, Marietta, and seven out of

¹¹ From Toolen to Rev. John A. O'Brien, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, October 7, 1966. Also see Toolen to O'Brien, September 2, 1966. Toolen papers. Annual Reports of North Alabama Missions, Folder, "North Alabama Missions," Cabinet RG 2.06, Records of the Chancery, Records of Parishes, Statistics. Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

¹² Transcription of interview, Father Paul Donnelly, by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., September 25, 1992. Transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien. Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 7, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

almost three hundred at Sacred Heart, Milledgeville.¹³ The annual reports give no indication of how comfortably these African Americans fit into parish life, but segregation more than likely characterized the seating arrangements. In 1992 one black Birmingham woman remembered her integrated parish, Our Lady of Fatima (originally Immaculate Conception), wherein blacks sat on the left side of the church and whites on the right. Hattie Bean told an interviewer that “nobody dared use that word [integrated] or even think about it. . . . Now granted, there were definite places to sit.”¹⁴

Another unidentified Alabama black man compared favorably his segregated experience with that of his Protestant friends. If any of them questioned his allegiance to the Catholic Church because of its persistent segregation, he responded that he could “go into the Cathedral for Mass whenever I want. I can go to St. Mary’s or to any other Catholic Church.” His Protestant friends, however, did not enjoy such liberties. “Let me see you just try to stick your nose in the Dauphin Way Baptist Church or in any of the Protestant Churches on Government Street,” this man reportedly said to his hypothetical friend. “You know what the usher would tell you right away. ‘Get out of here, boy, go where you belong.’”¹⁵

Southern Catholic leaders often took pride (however false or misdirected) in this type of integration. In a 1959 letter to Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans,

¹³ Box 052/3, Folder 6, Parishes / Missions, Annual Reports, 1960, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁴ Transcription of interview, Mrs. Hattie Bean and Mrs. Ann Taylor, by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., October 1, 1992. Transcribed by Mr. John J. P. O’Brien. Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 9, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

¹⁵ Quoted in Foley, “Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists,” Sage version, pp. 35-36.

Savannah-Atlanta's Bishop Francis Hyland recounted an incident in which a young Catholic African American visited non-Catholic relatives in Detroit during the summer of 1948. On Sunday morning, an uncle escorted the child to the nearest Catholic Church for mass. A white usher refused them entrance and pointed them toward another church where the blacks could gain entrance. Hyland shared with Rummel the comments of the girl's mother to one Georgia priest: "Father, a thing like that would not happen in Georgia." Hyland emphasized, "It would not."¹⁶ Maybe not, but white priests in Georgia's and Alabama's churches rarely--if ever--braved the subject of race relations in their sermons. Upon informally surveying black Catholics in the Mobile area, Father Foley learned "they had never heard sermons on the race question or on fair and impartial treatment of their people as Christians and Catholics. . . . I found out that no local priest had ever preached on the race question down here."¹⁷ Foley conducted his interviews in the 1940s, before the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision had the opportunity to galvanize white resistance to desegregation.¹⁸ It is probably safe to assume, therefore, that if they had not before, then few priests ventured into that territory during the 1950s either.

In un-southernlike fashion, small size or no, African Americans assumed prominent--if still segregated--positions in the southern Church. They were never

¹⁶ From Hyland to Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel, New Orleans, April 6, 1959. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁷ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, p. 38.

¹⁸ On the *Brown* decision as a galvanizing force for the white anti-civil rights movement, see Michael J. Klarman, "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *Journal of American History* 81 (June 1994): 81-118; Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, pp. 164-195.

leaders or spokesmen for the white dominated Catholic Church, to be sure; nevertheless, they participated in diocesan wide activities and were visible members of the Church. There were Catholic organizations such as the Knights of St. Peter Claver and the Colored Catholic Laymen's Association for blacks that paralleled those composed almost exclusively of whites.¹⁹ In addition, and perhaps more importantly, by 1965 the local chapter of the (otherwise all-white) Serra Club had at least two black members. In May 1965 the editor of *The Catholic Week*, Msgr. Francis J. Wade, reported to Toolen about the recent visit of a national Serra Club representative. "Our two Negro members amazed Mr. Donahue, as the racial problem is working havoc with [sic] Serra in many parts of the south including Nashville. When he walked into the Bankhead Hotel for lunch and found two Negroes among the men, he was taken aback." Even Chicago, which had the nation's largest Serra Club, had suffered from "the racial problem," with only one African-American member out of 250. Mobile, by contrast, had two blacks among thirty members.²⁰

At mid-century the Catholic Church went to great lengths to produce public sacred space, and African Americans shared in that process. In Alabama blacks participated in the most prominent of annual Catholic displays, Christ the King celebrations. The "colored division," as the posted march directions referred to them, lined up behind the other white "divisions," which were separated by school and

¹⁹ "Colored Catholic Laymen's Association Holds Meeting In Augusta," *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia*, November 27, 1948; clipping in Box R.G. 5, Organizations, 1.3 CLA, Anti-Catholic Bigotry, Folder, "Colored CLA," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

²⁰ From Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Wade to Toolen, May 10, 1965. Toolen papers.

gender.²¹ The spectacle of tens of thousands of Catholics parading through downtown Mobile or gathering at Rickwood Field in Birmingham certainly was enough to seize the attention of non-Catholics. Having a small proportion of participants be African American singled the Catholic Church out as unique. In Atlanta, furthermore, Bishop Hyland conducted integrated confirmation services at that city's Cathedral of Christ the King. In June 1957, for example, Hyland confirmed 208 adults. The newspaper record of the service makes no explicit mention of race, but "more than 80" of the confirmands were parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes in Atlanta, a predominantly African-American parish staffed by Society of African Missions priests. And in 1959 the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Rev. Michael McKeever, S.M.A., assisted Hyland in confirmation services.²²

Bishop Toolen of Mobile took a different confirmation path. He conducted services in the local parishes themselves, insuring that these special ceremonies remained segregated. Interviewed in the early 1990s, one black woman remembered the implicit racism evinced by even her own ordinary. Mrs. Earnestine Cotton converted to Catholicism at age fifteen, while a student at Immaculata High School in Birmingham. She was a member of Birmingham's Our Lady of Fatima Parish, when Sr. Rose Sevenich interviewed her in 1992. "I have no fond memories of Bishop Toolen," Cotton recalled. When the bishop administered the sacrament of confirmation "or

²¹ See, for example, "Directions To Be Followed At Mobile Celebration Of Christ The King Feast," *The Catholic Week*, October 19, 1945, p. 2; "Order For Mobile's Christ The King Procession," *The Catholic Week*, October 18, 1946, p. 2; "Mobile Plans For Greatest Christ The King Rally Ever," *The Catholic Week*, October 29, 1948, p. 2.

anything that he had to touch you [Negroes], he would automatically reach to wipe his hands. . . . I don't know why they thought this was going to come off on them [whites]."²³

Public educational opportunities for blacks in the South virtually always fell far short of white opportunities. Funding for black schools was a fraction of that for whites, black teachers were less educated, and facilities never equal to those provided for white students. As far as the black community was concerned, parochial schools served at least two different purposes. First, they offered an education that often surpassed public schools in quality. Secondly, parish schools provided the Church with opportunities to proselytize in the African-American community. In some locales, students in black parochial schools were Protestants taking advantage of the educational facilities. The white Catholic leadership capitalized on this situation to convert the parents of black pupils.²⁴ In 1963 Archbishop Toolen contacted a group of Irish sisters to convince them to relocate to Daphne, Alabama, to teach in a colored mission. The mission school had approximately two hundred children, Toolen wrote, "most of them

²² "Bishop Hyland Confirms Class of 208 Adults," June 22, 1957, newspaper clipping in Bishop Hyland Scrapbook; "Class of 278 Adults Confirmed By Bishop," May 30, 1959, newspaper clipping in Bishop Hyland Scrapbook. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

²³ For confirmation exercises at an African-American parish, see "Bishop Toolen Confirms In Selma; Officiates At Patriotic Ceremonies," *The Catholic Week*, April 22, 1950, p. 5; Transcription of interview with Mrs. Earnestine Cotton, by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., October 1, 1992. Transcribed by Mr. John J.P. O'Brien. Oral History Project, Box 1, Envelope 10, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

²⁴ See, for example, From Bishop Francis E. Hyland, Savannah to Very Rev. P. Harrington, S.M.A., East St. Louis, Illinois, January 8, 1951. Box FB-1, A - Ap, Savannah, Folder, "Canavan, Rev. Charles R. Society of African Missions, 1948-58," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA; "Catholic Negro Population Still Tiny But Growing Fast, Mid-Century Report Indicates," *The Catholic Week*, March 4, 1950, p. 1.

Baptists, but through these children we reach the parents and many of them become Catholics. It is not unusual for a family to be received into the Church together."²⁵

Parochial schools were almost invariably staffed by religious orders, so it is not surprising that Toolen would solicit help from Irish nuns. Some African Americans often credited female religious with teaching them those values that were honored in the civil rights movement's emphasis on non-violence. One black Birmingham woman pointed to the influence sisters had on her attitudes toward whites. The Sisters of Notre Dame staffed Our Lady of Fatima parish, and the Josephites provided priests for Earnestine Cotton's church. Cotton attributed her change of heart toward whites to their spiritual impact. The "most important people in my life were Sisters because . . . through them, I learned to love rather than hate."²⁶

Religious and cultural conflicts often resulted from Protestant blacks being educated in parochial schools by white priests and nuns. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Oblate Fathers) ran the Queen of Peace Colored Mission in Lakeland, Georgia, a rural community in the southern part of the state. In 1948 one third of the school's enrollment was non-Catholic. An undetermined number of those worshiped at local Pentecostal services. According to the parish newsletter, one morning during catechism lessons, one youngster proudly informed the priest that his brother, "Willie C.," "got the Holy Ghost last night." The priest, perhaps with a gleam in his eye and smirk on his lips, asked Willie how he could be certain of that experience. "He yelled at

²⁵ From Toolen to Rt. Rev. Lady Abbess, Kylemore Abbey, Connemara, Co. Galway, Ireland, August 28, 1963. Toolen papers.

²⁶ Transcription of interview with Mrs. Earnestine Cotton, by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., October 1, 1992.

me," Willie revealed. "What did you do then?" the priest asked. "I yelled right back," was the young boy's retort. The newsletter concluded the account by acknowledging that now "Father's problem is to explain to his Catholic children why they have to wait until Confirmation to receive a similar visitation."²⁷

Mission work among blacks was not particularly threatening to southern white society, since white southerners typically divorced religious experience from social concerns. That is, individual conversion and a personal encounter with God were good, even desirable, but there was nothing in southern Protestant theology that would suggest such an event should necessarily lead to any change in the racial status quo.²⁸ So long as segregation remained the order of the day, then, bringing blacks into the Catholic Church was acceptable. Even the small handful of African Americans who attended otherwise "white" parishes probably proved to be little threat to white society. Their numbers were small and seating arrangements clearly understood. As far as Christ the King celebrations were concerned, moreover, blacks brought up the rear of the procession. It was when Catholic priests and bishops either publicly allowed for the possibility of integration or openly advocated racial reform that the Church veered from the straight and narrow path of white southern society. By the 1950s, an increasing number of priests and bishops were doing just that. Following the lead of Catholic social doctrine, they slowly assumed segregation to be a moral issue. Prior to this,

²⁷ "Willie Gets The Holy Ghost," *The Queen's Chronicle*, Fall 1948, Volume I, No. I. Hugh Kinchley Collection, Box 1, Folder, "Queen of Peace, Lakeland," Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, GA.

²⁸ Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*; Hill, "The South's Two Cultures."

individual Catholics were lone voices--sometimes passionate and prophetic, other times academic and workmanlike --developing theological and moral arguments against racism.

The few decades before what historians now consider the advent of the civil rights movement in the 1950s was for many churchgoers a period of moral and spiritual awakening. A relatively small group of would-be activists laid the foundation for the later challenge to the South's--no less than the nation's--racial status quo. At least one small group of Catholics took the papal ideals of social justice seriously. In 1939 the Catholic Committee of the South originated when a Richmond, Virginia, layman, Paul D. Williams, sought to establish a social reform group, free of Marxist radicals, that would serve as an alternative to the Southern Conference on Human Welfare. Echoing the ideas of Pius XI, Williams faulted the SCHW and secular groups like it for "neglecting the close tie-up between economics and moral principles."²⁹ In June 1939 a group of Catholic bishops, priests, and laymen met in Cleveland, Ohio, at the National Social Action Congress and formed the CCS.

The Catholic Committee of the South never amounted to much more than the ten annual conventions it held between its inception in 1939 and its gradual dissolution by 1953. But its participants were passionate men and women who took racial justice and labor issues seriously. Yet, in the words of the Committee's historian, this was "an often isolated group of Catholic reformers who, when the final gavel sounded, had to

²⁹ Williams quoted in Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion, and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *The Catholic Historical Review* 68 (April 1982): 249-267, quotation on p. 251.

return usually to the loneliness of rural parishes."³⁰ A few members of the core group from the 1939 Cleveland meeting were Georgians. Bishop Gerald O'Hara of Savannah addressed the 1939 meeting, and Monsignor T. James McNamara, rector of Savannah's Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, was a co-organizer and first chairman.³¹ Initially, moreover, Bishop Toolen supported the endeavor as well, but he withdrew his assistance in 1941 after he concluded the Committee was not accomplishing enough. "All I can see," Toolen complained, "is a convention once a year with a number of names that mean nothing to us in the South, a few reproductions of pamphlets and a few meetings attended."³²

By bowing out only two years after its inception, Toolen barely gave the organization a chance to succeed. Indeed, the bishop had little patience for any movement that advocated civil rights and that was not devoted exclusively to evangelization of blacks. Nevertheless, the CCS's leaders brought their organization's message home to their fellow churchmen and women. In 1948 McNamara addressed Savannah's Kiwanis Club and endorsed President Truman's civil rights program. McNamara called for "equality before the law" for African Americans and criticized southerners for their "ostrich-like attitude" and refusal to face the nation's racial

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³¹ *Ibid.*; Brief vita, Rt. Rev. Msgr. T. James McNamara, V.G., P.A., Archives of the Diocese of Savannah, GA. See also, "Archbishop Stritch, Five Bishops, Many Priests and Religious, With Hundreds of the Laity, at Convention of Catholic Committee of the South," *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia*, May 27, 1944, p. 4-A.

³² Martensen, "Region, Religion, and Social Action," p. 254-255. Father Foley attributed the CCS's demise to Bishop Toolen's behind-the-scenes machinations. See Foley to Rev. Oliver Adams, Chickasaw, AL, November 23, 1977. Loose Folder, "St. Thomas Toolen, Osborne Study," Foley papers.

problem. Racial segregation contradicted American principles, he continued, and opened the door for communist influence among blacks. McNamara did not appeal directly to the ideals of Catholic social doctrine. But his notion that the ability to vote is "the citizen's God-given right, irrespective of race, color, creed or national origin" implies the belief common among American Catholics that their Church's and nation's welfare were interrelated. He accepted the idea that Catholic social doctrine was good for America.³³

At the 1949 annual convention, McNamara presided over the race relations workshop, which drew a crowd of more than 500 participants. McNamara's panel called for an end to segregated churches and open admission to graduate and professional schools and to hospitals. It also urged removal of any racial barrier "limiting vocations to the convent, brotherhood or priesthood." Another Georgia priest, the Very Rev. Daniel J. Bourke of Albany, declared at the same meeting in Lexington, Kentucky that "Catholic theology has absolutely no use for the pernicious doctrine of a superior race." Father Bourke continued, "even if it did not pay off financially there is only one correct way to treat the Negro." Catholic doctrine compelled white adherents to treat blacks as their equal, Bourke lectured the convention. African Americans "have rights no whit different from their white fellow citizens and it is sinful to deny them the exercise of their rights."³⁴

³³ "South's Race Segregation Called Aid To Reds By Georgian Priest," *The Catholic Week*, May 7, 1948, p. 1.

³⁴ "Segregation, Union Membership, Minimum Wage, Management-Labor Harmony Discussed At CCS," *The Catholic Week*, May 21, 1949, p. 4.

Bishop Toolen's impatience notwithstanding, *The Catholic Week* continued to publish regularly a CCS column and news about the annual conventions. Indeed, ten years after the Cleveland meeting, *The Catholic Week* praised the CCS for its efforts toward making the "Southland a bulwark of a Christian democracy economically as well as politically."³⁵ In addition to editorial praise, it was not uncommon for ideas shared by the CCS to appear in the diocese's official organ. In February 1949, for example, one *Catholic Week* column equated those who deliberately hindered racial progress with the Roman ruler who refused to stop Jesus' execution. "The men who stand in the way of social justice and interracial justice today are . . . the many who dip their hands with Pilate's in the water." In that same column, A. J. Jackson also drew a direct connection between the ideals of American democracy and "Catholic teaching that EVERY man is the image of God, and that all men are brothers under the Fatherhood of God." The Catholic respect for human dignity, Jackson concluded, "is the foundation of our civilization."³⁶

The Alabama laity did in fact demonstrate evidence of at least the seeds of a Catholic social ethic germinating within them. When a band of hooded nightriders attacked a Girl Scout camp in 1948 and ordered out of Birmingham two white women who were training black scout leaders, the offenders had still not been apprehended a year later. The Catholic Men's Club of Birmingham and *The Catholic Week* both denounced the attack and the police who were unable to locate any suspects. The men's

³⁵ "Tenth Anniversary Of Catholic Committee Of The South," *The Catholic Week*, May 21, 1949, p. 4.

³⁶ A.J. Jackson, "Our Stand: Catholic Committee of the South," *The Catholic Week*, February 11, 1949, p. 4.

club condemned the raiders' "lawless terrorism" and their violation of the white women's constitutional rights.³⁷ *The Catholic Week* referred to the assault as a "brazen and cowardly action." In that same editorial, published a year after the foray into the Girl Scout camp, the newspaper lamented a more recent attack on formerly white-owned homes purchased by blacks. The house bombings, the Catholic organ concluded, were a "crime against the natural right to possess private property. It is an invasion of human rights. It is against all Christian principles."³⁸

In effect, *The Catholic Week* defended the right of Birmingham's African Americans to buy homes wherever they pleased, despite both white public sentiment and local ordinances to the contrary. The Catholic Men's Club, in contrast, only condemned the violence of the would-be Klansmen. In its resolution, the club was careful to note that the white women were in "segregated sleeping quarters," a fact that should have made their contact with black women acceptable.

Through stories in their newspapers and the influence of bishops and certain priests, Catholic laymen in Alabama and Georgia were at least exposed to the social justice doctrines such as those espoused by Bishop William T. Mulloy of Covington, Kentucky. Delivering a sermon at the 1951 CCS meeting, Bishop Mulloy left no doubt that, in light of papal encyclicals, racial justice "is a moral question." What was more, Mulloy understood the Catholic Church to be chosen by God "as the spiritual leaders of

³⁷ "Birmingham Citizenry Aroused To Action By Robed, Hooded Hoodlumism," *The Catholic Week*, June 18, 1948, p. 1; "Challenge To Local Responsibility," *The Catholic Week*, June 18, 1948, p. 4; "Catholic Men's Club Of Birmingham Adopts Resolution On Negro Girl Scout Camp Raid," *The Catholic Week*, July 30, 1948, p. 1

the South.” As such, “we . . . cannot remain silent,” even at the expense of being labeled with “the opprobrious accusation of being ‘anti-Southern.’”³⁹ Mulloy spoke hopefully, certainly too optimistically. The Jesuit Foley of Mobile shared Mulloy’s optimism, as well as his reliance on Catholic social doctrine. In 1954 Foley served on the subcommittee on race for the Catholic Committee of the South and argued in favor of the CCS issuing a current policy statement on race. In calling for a statement, Foley urged the CCS to reassert the applicability of “clear statements made by the Popes, the Epistles, and the Gospels, on the unity of all Catholics in the Mystical body and the equal rights of all in the Church.” Foley argued that a statement by the Catholic Committee of the South could not be dismissed by white southerners, as statements by northern bishops, priests, and scholars had been.⁴⁰

Foley’s proposal demonstrated clearly the growing tension between the orthodoxy and hierarchy of the mid-century Catholic Church on the one hand, and its moral authority in racial justice issues on the other. Anticipating the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on school segregation, Foley feared that the Church was in danger of losing its moral authority to the Supreme Court. A statement by the CCS in early 1954, Foley maintained, “would reassert the traditional position of the Church as the highest moral authority in these matters of justice and right.” Foley

³⁸ “Second Major Challenge,” *The Catholic Week*, April 2, 1949, p. 4; see also, “Third Major Challenge,” *The Catholic Week*, June 18, 1949, p. 4.

³⁹ “Race Problem Solution Is Urged At Southern Catholic Convention,” *The Catholic Week*, January 27, 1951, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Discussion Outline, Catholic Committee of the South Current Policy Statement On Race, Part I, “The Necessity for a Current Policy Statement.” Loose Folder, “Fr. Foley, Personal, 1954-5,” Foley papers.

was concerned that the CCS re-emphasize the Church's "Catholicity . . . the unity of all Catholics in the Church." That unity, the statement reasoned, should nullify the Church's "formerly strict division of the Church's administrative functioning along racial lines." Finally, a declaration from the Catholic Committee of the South would clarify the Church's role in society "as Mother of all the faithful of all races, defender of the oppressed, opponent of injustices, protector of the working classes from exploitation, champion of the poor and unprivileged, and clear proponent of God's truth about relationship between human beings." In such pronouncements, Foley was nothing if not optimistic. He overestimated the CCS's teaching authority in the laity's eyes and inadvertently revealed how impotent activists like himself were in convincing "misguided Catholics" of the immorality of their racial prejudices.⁴¹ The Catholic Committee of the South may never have brought about integration of Church institutions or had any impact on southern society in general, but it was one step in the transition toward the realization that segregation was a moral problem.

Father Albert S. Foley served most of his career as professor of sociology at Spring Hill College, a Jesuit liberal arts institution in Mobile, Alabama. After early reluctance to get involved in a position he expected to occupy only temporarily, Foley became a prominent community activist. His accomplishments were atypical for the pre-Vatican II era in that he eagerly participated in ecumenical and interfaith—even secular--organizations. Such cooperation would become more commonplace after the

⁴¹ Discussion Outline, Catholic Committee of the South Current Policy Statement On Race, Part II, "The Opportuneness of the Current Policy Statement," and Part III, "The Advantages Accruing from the New Policy Statement." Loose Folder, "Fr. Foley, Personal, 1954-5," Foley papers.

Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, but Catholics who sought to influence the civil rights movement were forced to branch out and look beyond their Church's organizations. Father Foley was active in the local division of the Southern Regional Council, the Alabama (and Mobile) Council on Human Relations, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the Catholic Committee of the South. He can also be judged by the enemies he made through his activism. By his own telling, he was a favorite target of the Ku Klux Klan, and members of his own Church often were reluctant to be associated with him.

In the mid-1950s Foley served as chairman of the Mobile chapter of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, which operated under the auspices of the Southern Regional Council. The human relations council, according to Foley, was an ecumenical and integrated "organization for the educational approach to the resolution of inter-racial tension."⁴² Among other things, Foley was responsible for adult community education on behalf of the Council, often leading classes that, as one report noted, were integrated both "racially and religiously."⁴³ Foley was a marginal character in local church politics and government, but his reform efforts reveal how far the Alabama Catholic Church fell short in racial and social justice. More aggressive in opposing segregation than the elder Jesuit John LaFarge, whose interracialism influenced Foley, the Spring Hill Jesuit demonstrated that mere evangelism of blacks

⁴² Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, pp. [43-47].

⁴³ Report by Frederick B. Routh, Assistant Director for State Organization, Southern Regional Council, February 28, 1955. Southern Regional Council collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Linn-Henley Research Library, Birmingham Public Library. These are photocopies of originals from the SRC archives, Atlanta.

was not sufficient. He was part of the next generation of civil rights activists, those whom LaFarge's biographer has described as "younger, bolder, and more action-oriented, ecumenical Catholics." Despite being in such company, however, in Alabama Foley was swimming upstream in a river full of obstacles.⁴⁴

A Louisiana native, Foley was reared in the segregated South and "grew to know the Civil War traditions that were everywhere present in New Orleans." In the Catholic churches of his youth, he could not recall ever hearing a sermon on the race question, "never a bleat out of any of the play-safe pastors."⁴⁵ It would have been a small wonder if he had. Foley reached young adulthood during the reign of Huey Long, years when racist demagoguery stirred white lower classes and offered only hollow promises to blacks.⁴⁶ Foley's own education in interracialism came slowly. Indeed, he later recalled that "these early convictions and prejudices were not even affected very deeply by my theological studies during the war years, 1939-1943."⁴⁷ It was not until he was assigned to teach a course on "Migration, Immigration, and Race" at Spring Hill that Foley gave serious deliberation to the Catholic Church's segregated patterns.

⁴⁴ On LaFarge, see David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. 358; David W. Southern, "But Think of the Kids: Catholic Interracialists and the Great American Taboo of Race Mixing," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16:3 (Summer 1998): 67-93.

⁴⁵ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists," Sage version, pp. 26, 27.

⁴⁶ On Louisiana, see Fairclough, *Race & Democracy*, especially Chapter 2.

⁴⁷ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists," Sage version, p. 28.

In south Alabama, he interviewed people who worked “in the Negro field, Catholic Negroes themselves, and priests close to the bishop.” Foley concluded that the southern Church was not “independent of the prejudiced laity, who hold the purse strings.” Therefore, “they have to tread warily or pay the price in shrunken revenues.” He blamed the “clannish Irish-born clergy” for their “intransigence” as well, and claimed that church leaders used the term “niggers,” even at official banquets in the presence of black servants.⁴⁸ Father Foley concluded that the racial problem in the southern Church (especially in Alabama) was “much more serious and widespread than I had at first realized.” Rather than ignore the problem and act as if it did not exist, which Foley wrote was his first reaction, the Jesuit became increasingly active in discussions on racial justice issues among his peers.

Indeed, he wrote his doctoral dissertation in sociology at the University of North Carolina on race relations in the archdiocese of Washington, D.C. Before being denied access to police records, Foley intended to study the African-American community’s relationship with Washington’s law enforcement. Instead, Foley turned his scholarly investigative skills to the Catholic Church and the Washington Negro. Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle of Washington signed off on the project because, in Foley’s words, “he wanted an exact record to be kept of the progress made towards the desegregation of the Catholic Church in the District of Columbia and the removal of the great scandal that this was in the eyes of the blacks and the diplomatic community.” O’Boyle feared that segregation “was impeding the battle against atheistic communism” and “was also

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

hurting the moral leadership of the United States which had resulted from the military triumph over Hitler spearheaded by the United States.”⁴⁹ Foley performed his doctoral research in 1949, interviewing priests, school principals, directors of Catholic institutions, and black Catholic leaders. He completed the dissertation in 1950.

Archbishop O’Boyle had advocated integration of Catholic associations within the diocese, but Foley was openly critical of that city’s interracial movement. Foley concluded that the Washington diocese was one in “transition from its former stage of comparative conformity with the overall community patterns of segregation to a stage of more experimental progress toward an integrated ideal of racial unity.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Foley reported “pro-segregation clergy” summoning police to eject Negro worshippers from their “white” parishes and resegregating Catholic organizations. For example, those priests formed segregated parish chapters of the Cana Conference (an apostolate for married couples) in all white parishes but neglected to organize in black parishes or to allow blacks to participate in the white parish units. The Bishop of Raleigh, Vincent Waters, granted the dissertation manuscript the *imprimatur* and authorized publication with the University of North Carolina Press. By Foley’s account (and he tended toward the dramatic), a copy of the manuscript fell into the hands of Washington’s priests, several of whom appealed to O’Boyle to suppress its publication. Bishop Waters

⁴⁹ Foley, “In the Shadow of the White Camellias,” Spring Hill version, p. [99].

⁵⁰ Albert Sidney Foley, “The Catholic Church and the Washington Negro,” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1950), p. 325.

withdrew the *imprimatur* at the archbishop's request.⁵¹ The dissertation remained unpublished.

Despite that setback, Foley believed he was particularly well situated to have an immediate impact on southern society. He was a "native Southerner" and, therefore, would be taken more seriously by other white southerners. His Confederate genealogical credentials were respectable, if not impeccable. He was the grandson of a Confederate Army veteran who had named his son (Father Foley's father) after a "Confederate saint, General Albert Sidney Johnston." The traditional Catholic practice would have compelled the Foley patriarch to name his son after an Irish saint instead. Rev. Foley, for his part, shared his father's--and the good General Johnston's--name. With appropriate southern identity intact, Foley was certain he "would not be written off by other Southerners as just another carpetbagger from the North, agitating for Negro causes as an outside disturber of our southern 'peace.'"⁵² Foley overestimated any natural relationship he would have with his fellow white native southerners. But his assessment of the situation for outsiders could not have been more accurate. New Orleans native or not, Father Foley was an outsider, a reformer on the periphery of church power, who was convinced he was in the mainstream of modern Catholicism.

His position at Spring Hill College provided a small measure of cover for Foley and his work. Many of his projects fell under the rubric of community education and appeared less threatening than other forms of direct action might have. He sponsored,

⁵¹ Foley, "In the Shadow of the White Camellias," Spring Hill version, pp. [103-105].

⁵² Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists," Sage version, p. 23.

for example, the formation of the Mobile Students' Interracial Council. The Jesuits insisted that such an organization required the approval and cooperation of the local ordinary. When Foley, along with an economics professor and Spring Hill's president--all three Jesuit priests--approached Bishop Toolen about the interracial experiment, the bishop, as Foley recalled the meeting, "launched into a tirade against the Social Action Committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference which had just published a statement of Negro rights in the field of human relations." Toolen also denounced "other radicals who were agitating among the Negroes." Mobile's prelate required all priests (who were exclusively white) working within the black community "to operate behind the segregation lines and not push the blacks on the whites in Alabama." Toolen assured the Jesuits that he fully supported "the religious equality of the Negro and his right to access to the church and the sacraments [*sic*]." Foley, then, convinced him that was the sole purpose of the interracial student organization, "promoting religious equality and understanding on the part of both black and white students." Toolen permitted formation of the group but warned against "social equality which led to nothing but trouble."⁵³

Foley and Spring Hill's interracial organization proposed a series of projects that would foster religious equality, but that also promoted integration. The Interracial Council at least talked about projects that would require integrated religious arrangements. The student group called for interracial participation in a variety of spiritual exercises, including mass attendance and prayer groups, Stations of the Cross

⁵³ Ibid., p. 41; the same story appears in "In the Shadow of the White Camellias," Spring Hill version, pp. [210-213].

during Lent, communion and Holy Hours, rosaries and May Devotions, and novenas to black saints. They also urged the bishop to conduct integrated confirmation services and planned an interracial pilgrimage to St. Augustine's Seminary in Bay St. Louis. The rationale for this wide-ranging agenda came directly from Catholic doctrine. That the Catholic Church is the mystical body of Christ, the group reasoned, for example, should prompt Catholics to attend mass on an integrated basis. In addition, the belief in the communion of saints—that is “all saints in heaven [are] united to all Catholics here on earth”—should encourage white Catholics to offer devotion to black saints as well as white.⁵⁴ Of course, simply because one group proposed such an agenda did not mean that all students agreed. In 1946 the Mobile Students' Interracial Council sponsored a survey of Spring Hill students about their racial attitudes. In general students supported separation of the races, but an overwhelming majority favored the treatment of Negroes as spiritual equals. Ninety-six percent said African Americans should receive “equal opportunity and equal treatment in law courts,” and over 80 percent believed that blacks should receive salaries equal to whites. Seventy percent admitted they would receive communion from a black priest (22 percent did not know), and 75 percent would not be opposed to receiving communion alongside blacks.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Mobile Students' Interracial Council, Discussion Outline, Loose Folder, “Materials on Dixie, 1958”; “What To Do In Interracial Week,” Foley papers; “Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists,” Sage version, pp. 41-41a. On the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, see Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* [Mystical Body of Christ], June 29, 1943, in Claudia Carlen, L.H.M., ed., *The Papal Encyclicals, 1939-1958* ([Wilmington, NC]: McGrath, 1981).

⁵⁵ “Interracial Attitude Questionnaire” and “Spring Hill College: Interracial Attitude Survey Summary of Results,” Folder, “Race File, 1947-,” Container, Race Relations / Human Rights; From Francis J. Corley, S.J., Institute of Social Order, St. Louis, Missouri to Foley, November 27, 1946. Folder “Race File, 1947 -” Container, Race Relations / Human Rights, Foley Papers.

The bishop and other white Catholics in Mobile were unhappy with Foley's interracial work, but it was the proposed integrated seminary field trip that prompted Foley's transfer out of the diocese--a move intended to be permanent. A parent of one of the white girls planning to make the "pilgrimage" learned that his daughter would be on a bus with Negro Catholic veterans from Most Pure Heart of Mary high school. In Foley's words, "At that he exploded. He called four or five of his friends and got them to call the bishop to protest my 'forcing' of white girls and black veterans together for an all-day picnic at St. Augustine's Seminary." Toolen complained to Foley's superiors "urging them to discipline me for having violated the diocesan policy of not promoting integration of whites and blacks." His religious order removed Foley, sent him to do his graduate work at North Carolina, and then assigned him to the Institute of Social Order at St. Louis University "for the rest of my life." Foley enjoyed the drama and conflict that his activism prompted, and he relished the part of radical (symbolic) martyr. His memoirs boast, "I was considered to be too radical to be tolerated in the South."⁵⁶ By 1953, however, Foley was back at Spring Hill, a "temporary" reassignment that would last until his death in the early 1990s.

By his own admission, Foley grew up comfortable with racial separation in his native New Orleans; and it was not until he reached adulthood that he realized the social harm inherent in the status quo. What's more, his awakening was not primarily a spiritual one; rather, it resulted from broad reading in sociological texts about race relations and personal interactions with those people most affected by the racial status

⁵⁶ "Shadow of the White Camellia: Reminiscences of a Tangle With Terrorists," Sage version, p. 41a.

quo in Alabama. Despite the secular influences, it did not take long for the Jesuit to turn to Church doctrine for the necessary moral authority.

One's cultural and religious identities are often shaped by defining oneself in opposition to another person or group. Perhaps the best way to assess Foley and his position in both southern society and the Catholic Church (northern and southern) is to judge him by his enemies. His antagonists often had nothing in common, save their opposition to the civil rights movement and the Jesuit's involvement in the fight for racial justice. And even then, there was considerable variance within the enemy camp. For example, some saw integration as inevitable and favored only a gradual march toward that inescapable destination, while others saw no such inevitability and offered violent opposition to desegregation. Both sides were no less opposed to Foley's presence in Mobile. On the one extreme--the former--was Foley's own bishop, Thomas J. Toolen. On the other was the Ku Klux Klan.

The Klan's opposition to Foley is perhaps more easily understood. Indeed, the Jesuit seemed to invite the Klan's wrath, even to welcome the attention that the "dunce-cap and bed-sheet brigade" granted him.⁵⁷ Foley made it his business, with the help of Spring Hill students, to monitor the KKK and keep tabs on their activities in the Mobile area. According to Foley's accounting of their activities, the Klan had assumed a more prominent public stance in Mobile during the summer of 1956, when a prominent white

⁵⁷ From Foley to Mr. and Mrs. Jerome S. Murray, Annapolis, Maryland, September 24, 1971. Unlabeled Folder, Container, Foley KKK, Foley papers.

woman attempted to enroll her black foster daughter in a segregated public school.⁵⁸ In September 1956, Foley and the Mobile chapter of the Alabama Council on Human Relations urged the city commission to pass ordinances against Klan violence. Foley himself drafted the model ordinances and delivered them to Mayor Joseph N. Langan, a fellow Catholic. Langan concurred in the ordinances' substance and agreed to present them to the commission. The first statute would have prohibited police membership in the Klan. The second would outlaw "intimidation by exhibit," a regulation aimed at cross burnings. Other commissioners objected to the ordinances, and a local newspaper reporter identified Foley as the one who initiated the new measures.⁵⁹

Foley later claimed in his memoirs that this publicity was "entirely unsought." The Alabama Council on Human Relations preferred "working behind the scenes." Nevertheless, according to Foley, the Klan took notice. Local newspaper advertisements by the Klan referred to Foley as "a man of large profession and small deeds, a communist and quisling of foreign seed who wants to write new city ordinances."⁶⁰ What precipitated their reaction to Foley is unclear from Foley's papers. His memoirs and the above quotation blame the city commission ordinances initiated by

⁵⁸ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, pp. [48-49]; later in the memoir, Foley wrote that the local Klan started in 1948, p. [89]. See also, "Effort Made Here To Enroll Negro In White School," *The Mobile Register*, September 13, 1956, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. [50-52]. Langan was perhaps the most racially moderate member of the city commission. In 1956, for example, he formed a special thirty-member biracial committee to study race relations in Mobile. His fellow commissioners dissociated themselves completely from the committee, claiming, according to the *Mobile Register* that the committee was "solely the project of Mayor Langan and do[es] not represent the official views of the City Commission." See, "Biracial Group Said All-Langan," *The Mobile Register*, April 5, 1956, p. 2-A.

⁶⁰ quoted in Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, p. [52].

Foley. But Foley's response to Elmo Barnard, the local Klan leader, defends the Jesuit's survey of local attitudes toward the KKK. Foley's statement was dated the same day (October 13, 1956) that a story ran in the *Mobile Press* about the burning of a cross at the home of a local black, Allen Travis. Elmo Barnard, spokesman and leader of the Mobile Klan, denied any involvement in the bombing. Barnard also took the opportunity to denounce a recent survey conducted by Foley and Spring Hill College students and to defend his organization as "the only true, patriotic, white organization left."⁶¹

In his response to Barnard, Foley cited the Klan as a "subversive organization" according to the U.S. attorney general. Foley also ridiculed the white knights' patriotism. Failing to hide his venom, Foley snidely suggested that perhaps the attorney general's subversive list had recently been updated "in recognition of the Klan's patriotic activity in stirring up the Tuscaloosa riots of earlier this year, in reward for its 'patriotic' record of arson, killings, and intimidations elsewhere in the South and in our own community." Foley invited Barnard and the Klan to conduct their own "equally impartial survey and find out the facts." Foley was "convinced that the findings they would uncover would be just as damaging to their own self-appointed headship of this community as were my findings."⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid.; "Deputies Probe Cross Burning," *Mobile Press*, October 13, 1956, clipping in Container – Foley KKK, Folder – Cox, Mobile, File, Foley papers.

⁶² Statement by Father Albert S. Foley, S.J., Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Spring Hill College, October 13, 1956. Loose Folder, "So. 155. KKK – APA, etc.," Foley papers.

Spring Hill College students conducted the survey in question. The "Survey of Attitudes Toward the Ku Klux Klan as a Social Problem" contained five questions, each with a variety of possible answers respondents could select. The survey solicited individual opinions about the Klan (e.g. "How do you estimate it personally?") and what respondents believed should be done about the KKK. Possible responses to the first question ranged from the Klan is "a harmless group of funmakers engaged in boyish pranks" to "an illegal, subversive organization listed by the U.S. Attorney General as subversive." As to what should be done about the Klan locally, those who answered selected possibilities ranging from "nothing" to "Governor should send in state highway patrol, call out the militia."⁶³

Sixty Spring Hill students conducted the survey, polling some six hundred Mobilians. Many of the respondents were of college age (probably at Spring Hill), and not all called Mobile home. Foley reported that 85 percent of those questioned considered the Klan a threat to the community.⁶⁴ Catholics were more likely than Protestants to consider the Klan "a grave menace," a "serious, formidable danger," or "an illegal subversive organization." One person contrasted the state of Alabama's position on the KKK with its outlawing of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "It seems completely illogical to me" why a group like the NAACP, which employs "peaceful and legal ways to obtain" their goals, should be banned by state law, when the KKK was "allowed to organize and operate. . . . The

⁶³ Survey of Attitudes Toward the Ku Klux Klan As A Social Problem." Container - Foley KKK, Folder, KKK Surveys, Foley papers.

⁶⁴ Albert S. Foley, "KKK in Mobile, Ala.," *America*, December 8, 1956, pp. 298-299.

KKK is, for my money, the most diabolical organization going.” Another respondent labeled the KKK as “very unjust, unchristian, & undemocratic,” whose members “would have to be ignorant to a certain extent.”⁶⁵

Despite the Klan’s anti-Catholic reputation, there were Catholics who perceived it as not only no threat to society, but a positive good. One Mississippi Catholic wrote a personal note to Foley, accusing the priest of being “prejudiced, hopelessly, about the segregation question.” This Mississippian reasoned--as many white southerners did in the 1950s--that African Americans must be happy in the South, or else more of them would leave the region for the North. So long as Negroes were in their “place, living in harmony with the whites,” then the South would remain peaceful, he concluded. A Catholic New Yorker, evidently in school at Spring Hill, acknowledged that the Klan was “against the Catholics as much as the Coloreds but I am willing to take my chances with them.” One Mobile Catholic simply argued that without the Klan, “the negroes will try to overrun the U.S.” A second Mobilian refused to answer the survey’s questions, but she claimed a need for “more organizations like them [the KKK]. This is the only way we can run the colored people out of Mobile.”⁶⁶ According to the survey results, such extreme Catholic reaction was not the norm, but it does indicate the extent to which white Catholics tended to identify as southerners when race was a factor. Foley even accused Catholics of being Klan members.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Responses to Survey of Attitudes Toward the Ku Klux Klan As A Social Problem.” Container – Foley KKK, Folder – KKK Surveys, Foley papers.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Foley, “Shadow of the White Camellia,” Sage version.

Foley took the Klan's newspaper advertisement attacking him as a personal affront. "They thereby issued a challenge to me that I could not easily walk away from without appearing to be either cowardly or stupid. I, therefore, took up this challenge and decided to go to work to see what could be done about curbing the Klan."⁶⁸ Foley began with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reasoning (optimistically, it turned out) that the FBI would be eager to rid the South of an acknowledged subversive organization. When that tactic proved fruitless, Foley took matters into his own hands. He obtained anonymous financial support and, with unnamed accomplices,⁶⁹ hired an undercover man to infiltrate the local klavern. Foley's intelligence man was unable to learn the identities of Klansmen, who wore masks to their meetings. To remedy this, Foley, along with Spring Hill students and faculty, would attend Klan meetings and collect license tag numbers of cars at the meeting. This led to more than one dangerous confrontation between the white knights and their Spring Hill opponents.⁷⁰ As a result of their snooping, Foley and his Spring Hill cohorts were able to develop a social profile of the local klavern. According to their field work, the local Klan consisted of a "motley collection" of laborers and "petty salesmen," the "grim, tight-lipped, hard-faced, frustrated, Southern poor whites, who individually, are powerless to do anything and who feel important only when they assume the mantle of the fallen dead of the Civil

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. [52]. The chronology in Foley's memoirs and papers is not always precise. It could be that the advertisement prompted Foley's survey and the efforts to pass the city ordinances. All three are collapsed almost into a single event in Foley's recollection.

⁶⁹ In his memoirs describing these activities, Foley refers to "we" but it is not clear to whom he is referring. Most likely, he means the Mobile chapter of the Alabama Council on Human Relations.

⁷⁰ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, pp. 8-12, [55-56, 93-98].

War.”⁷¹ Foley suspected two deputy sheriffs of being members, and the sheriff “has come under suspicion as being highly sympathetic and cooperative with the Klan.”⁷²

Foley perceived himself to be an objective, even scholarly, observer of the Klan, someone motivated by reason and not emotion. He published several articles in national periodicals about the organization, and once prepared a talk for the local radio station, entitled “An Evaluation of a Contemporary Local and Regional Social Problem.” Foley referred to the proposed radio talk as an “objective and dispassionate statement of fact and history,” but radio station owners believed otherwise. Fearing Klan reprisals, they refused to air it. The address may have been an accurate history of the Klan’s origins and tactics, but it was nothing if not subjective and passionate. For example, Foley begins the talk with a rhetorical question about the Klan’s origins and how that group manages “to continue cropping up like a ghost from the grave moving about in a dark night of humanity’s soul and haunting the South with a specter from the dead and by-gone past.” Foley then traced the “social problem” from its Reconstruction origins to its present incarnation in the 1950s. Foley concluded his “objective and dispassionate” speech by appealing to his would-be listeners not to “surrender the American ideal of the rule of law for the anti-American reign of terror to which the klan beckons us.”⁷³

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. {57, 99}.

⁷² Present Position of the Gulf Klan, Inc. In Mobile, March 8, 1957. Also, Gulf Ku Klux Klan, Top Personnel, March 9, 1957. Folder, “Encounter With The Klan,” Container, Foley KKK, Foley papers.

⁷³ Foley, “Shadow of the White Camellia,” Sage version, pp. 18-22; “An Evaluation of a Contemporary Local and Regional Social Problem,” Talk: Holy Name Hour: October 20, WKRG Radio Station, 9:30 – 9:45 PM, Loose Folder, So. 155. KKK - APA, etc. Foley papers. For Foley’s writings on the Klan, see “KKK in Mobile, Ala.,” *America*, December 8, 1956, pp. 298-299.

Given the Klan's history of violence and intimidation, the radio station's owners probably acted prudently, if not very boldly.

On a couple of occasions, Foley and Spring Hill College became targets of hooded hooligans. One winter night in January 1957, the Klan ended one of its regular meetings by attempting to burn a cross on the campus of Spring Hill. The Klan's caravan to campus comprised two or three dozen cars. Before they successfully erected and lit the cross, however, Spring Hill students converged on them from nearby dormitories and chased the white knights off campus. No doubt embarrassed, the Klansmen returned the next night, with a smaller cross planted outside the main gates of campus. Students retaliated by burning the Klan in effigy a few nights later.⁷⁴

The KKK posed a more serious threat to others in and around Mobile.⁷⁵ But not all the reaction to Foley's activism was violent, nor Klan related. Indeed, much of the opposition Foley engendered came from within his own church. He antagonized many white Catholics and showed little respect for the bishop, whom he derisively labeled (privately, to be sure) "Saint Thomas." Not long after his failed radio debut, college authorities tried to halt his public campaign against the Klan. Foley blamed his "bull-dog Irish tenacity" for refusing to back down so easily.⁷⁶ Other Catholics did not like Foley's KKK campaign because they feared the Klan would turn on them. Foley recalled that "local Catholic clergy and the bishop" feared a Klan rampage against

⁷⁴ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, pp. 13-16, [68-72].

⁷⁵ See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. [59-64].

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23.

vulnerable churches and schools. "The chancellor of the diocese told me that I could go ahead and make a martyr out of myself by defending the Negroes, but that I should not continue to endanger the rest of the clergy and laity by making the battle seem to be just a Catholic one."⁷⁷ Prior to the height of his activism, Foley occasionally substituted for local pastors during Sunday masses. As he became more critical of Catholics' reluctance to take to heart their Church's teachings on justice, he received fewer invitations to speak and say mass. Eventually, he found himself *persona non grata* in area parishes.⁷⁸

Father Foley also cultivated a contentious relationship with Bishop Toolen. On more than one occasion, Toolen appealed to Foley's superiors to remove the Jesuit from the diocese. The first came following the Mobile Students' Interracial Council's planned trip to the seminary at Bay St. Louis. A second time, Foley angered the bishop with his role in the mediation—through the Alabama Council on Human Relations—of the desegregation of Mobile's downtown lunch counters. Foley acted at Mayor Joseph Langan's request, but Toolen irrationally feared that Foley was convening blacks "in order to train them in violent tactics for breaking up the lunch counters and causing disorders in the downtown area." Only after Langan intervened with Toolen did the ordinary withdraw his request for Foley's removal.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. [87].

⁷⁸ Foley, "In the Shadow of the White Camellias," Spring Hill version, pp. [222-224]; Sage interview.

⁷⁹ Foley, "In the Shadow of the White Camellias," Spring Hill version, pp. [225-227]; Langan interview with the author, June 29, 1999; audio tape in possession of author. For Langan's request that Foley and the ACHR mediate the desegregation of downtown, see Memo from Foley to Commissioner Langan, Rev. J.M. Lowery, Mr. John LeFlore, and Rev. Robert Hughes, August 24, 1960. John LeFlore Papers, Reel 9,

Foley also acted as leader of the Alabama Advisory Committee of the Justice Department's Commission on Civil Rights, a position that allowed Foley much public exposure and a platform for his activism. Among other things, the advisory committee monitored local civil rights abuses by public officials and reported them to the civil rights commission.⁸⁰ Foley was chairman of, and the lone Catholic on, the committee, whose members came from all over the state, from Mobile to Florence. Under the auspices of the civil rights commission, in 1961 Foley initiated a statewide questionnaire intended to study the application of justice throughout Alabama. He sent the questionnaire to attorneys, judges, and law enforcement personnel across the state. The survey itself, let alone its results, raised the ire of many white Alabamians, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The report chronicled police brutality and mistreatment of black prisoners throughout Alabama, but particularly in Montgomery and Birmingham.⁸¹ Foley leaked the report to the Associated Press, and the resulting brouhaha brought condemnation upon the "race mixers" and "integrationists" who had issued the report.⁸²

35A, "Alabama Council on Human Relations, 1955-1971," Archives of the University of South Alabama.

⁸⁰ See for example, Mrs. Moreland G. (Marjorie L.) Smith, Montgomery to Foley, March 2, 1961. Folder, "Ala. Civil Rights Cases," Container, Race Relations / Human Rights, Foley papers.

⁸¹ In 1963 Foley expanded and revised the report. See Foley, "The Administration of Justice in the State of Alabama, 1958 - 1963." Loose Folder, "Birmingham, 1963; America Article; Siena Speech; M.L. King's Letter from Birm. Jail," Foley papers.

⁸² "Rights Group Urges Probing Of Police Power In Alabama," *Mobile Press-Register*, September 10, 1961. clipping in Folder, "Ala. Civil Rights," Container, Race Relations / Human Rights, Foley papers; Sage interview.

Montgomery's *Alabama Journal* labeled the report "libel" by "well known integrationists," whose only motivation could be "that they hope to receive their reward from the Kennedys, the Humphreys, the Reuthers and all the other crackpot politicians who think they can profit politically by circulating lies about the relations between the races in Alabama."⁸³ Montgomery's commissioner of public affairs, L. B. Sullivan threatened to sue Foley and his committee. Foley received assurance from the attorney general's office that the commission on civil rights would be responsible for any legal issues or lawsuits resulting from their involvement with Justice Department projects.⁸⁴

Evidently, a year later Foley undertook a second, expanded study of Alabama's justice system. This one brought Foley to the attention of the chancery yet again, and precipitated the bishop's complaint to Foley's immediate superior, the president of Spring Hill. Robert C. Garrison, a Birmingham attorney, complained directly to Foley and then forwarded his written grievance to Toolen as well. Garrison described Foley's questionnaire as "so loaded and slanted in the direction of smearing the white people of Alabama as to be revolting." He conceded that some of the "terrible conditions" Foley described existed in "isolated instances," but those were not unique to Alabama. Msgr. Philip Cullen, the diocesan chancellor, appealed on behalf of Toolen to the Very Rev. A. William Crandell, S.J., president of Spring Hill College. Cullen claimed that Foley's

⁸³ "Race Mixers Libel Alabama," *Alabama Journal*, September 11, 1961, p. 4-A; clipping in Folder, "Ala. Civil Rights," Container, Race Relations/ Human Rights, Foley papers.

⁸⁴ Telegram from L.B. Sullivan to Foley, September 8, 1961; Foley's response, September 9, 1961; and Sullivan to Foley, September 11, 1961; Memo from Foley to Advisory Committee Members, September 9, 1961; Foley to Berl Bernhard, Director, Civil Rights Commission, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1961; Bernhard to Foley, September 11, 1961. Folder, "Ala. Civil Rights," Container, Race Relations/ Human Rights, Foley papers.

questions were "'loaded,' and have caused considerable resentment among the lawyers." Cullen reminded Crandell that the archbishop had requested Foley's removal before, only to relent "because Father Smith pleaded that he be allowed to remain." Cullen urged the president to "take some steps to remedy the situation before it got worse." Crandell later informed the chancellor that "in deference to your wishes and to those of His Excellency," the sociology department had been instructed to cease its study of the administration of justice in Alabama.⁸⁵

Foley remained near the front lines of the civil rights struggle, monitoring the progress of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality's 1961 Freedom Rides in Alabama and hostility in Birmingham. In his dual capacity as president of the Alabama Council on Human Relations and chairman of the Alabama Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission, Foley "became deeply involved in the Birmingham crisis." Foley's idea of civil rights agitation included "the wise use of the tactics of negotiation, court action, legislation, education, conciliation, bargaining and even direct action where this could be successful."⁸⁶ Foley was not a gradualist, like his bishop, but he firmly believed that moral persuasion and an emphasis on human relations would bring about the desired integration. This led to Foley's break with Martin Luther King, Jr. over 1963's Birmingham demonstrations. Foley implored King to postpone demonstrations until

⁸⁵ From Robert C. Garrison, Birmingham to Toolen, July 16, 1962; From Garrison to Foley, July 13, 1962; From Msgr. Philip Cullen to Garrison, July 18, 1962; From Cullen to Vincent F. Kilborn, Mobile, July 19, 1962; From Cullen to Very Rev. A. William Crandell, S.J., Spring Hill College, July 19, 1962; From Crandell to Cullen, July 23, 1962. Toolen papers.

⁸⁶ Foley, "Shadow of the White Camellia," Sage version, p. [150].

Albert Boutwell's more moderate (relatively speaking, of course) mayoral administration could replace that of Eugene "Bull" Connor. When King refused to wait any longer, Foley then criticized the participation of school children in the confrontations with Connor's fire hoses and police dogs.⁸⁷

Foley remained committed to the ideal of integration, to be sure. But his moral vision would not expand to include, as he saw it, confrontation for confrontation's sake. The best route to interracial understanding was always through proper understandings of morality and Christian social justice teaching. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Foley was not so alone in his urgent desire for southern whites to appreciate the immorality of segregation and racism. By the 1950s, racism had become a moral issue for some American Catholics, but even then most laypeople only reluctantly (if at all) accepted the immorality of segregation. In 1958 the American hierarchy declared segregation a moral wrong that could not be tolerated. The bishops' statement declared that "the heart of the race question is moral and religious" and that "segregation cannot be reconciled with the Christian view of our fellow man." They further recognized that segregation had resulted in "oppressive conditions and the denial of basic human rights for the Negro."⁸⁸

In February 1961 the bishops of Georgia and South Carolina issued a pastoral letter condemning racism and segregation. Bishops Francis Hyland (Atlanta), Thomas

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. [150ff]; Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, pp. 222, 380 (note 36).

⁸⁸ "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," *A Syllabus on Racial Justice*, For Use in the Catholic Schools, Grades 7 – 12, of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Box 036/6, Folder 51, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA. In 1963, furthermore, Pope John XXIII issued the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), which similarly condemned racial discrimination.

McDonough (Savannah), and Paul Hallinan (Charleston) proclaimed to their parishioners that "hatred is neither Christian nor American" and that "the Church is moving steadily toward the full Christian solution" to racial segregation. These relatively progressive bishops announced that Catholic schools in their dioceses would be integrated "as soon as this can be done with safety to the children and the schools." This should occur no later than the desegregation of the public schools, the prelates promised.⁸⁹ Hyland, at least, acknowledged that the "problem cannot be solved, even so far as the Church down here is concerned, by a few pastoral letters from a few Bishops." Nevertheless, he, McDonough, and Hallinan, took an unsteady half-step toward preparing their church members for what seemed increasingly like the inevitable.⁹⁰

The 1960s did mark a new era for both the civil rights movement and the Catholic Church. The bishops' statement indicated the direction in which many Church leaders were ready to take their flock. One could argue that such leadership came a decade or more too late. But it in fact was too soon for most white Catholics, who were not prepared to participate in a fully integrated Church or society. For them, papal encyclicals on social justice and the notion that God and the Church show no distinction between races did not necessarily compel equal treatment. Whites could easily point to the evangelization of blacks and argue that the Church was not showing any prejudice

⁸⁹ Pastoral letter, February 19, 1961, reprinted in *Syllabus on Racial Justice*; From Hyland to Hallinan, Charleston, SC, January 25, 1961; From David Murphy, East Wesley Road, Atlanta to Hyland, February 19, 1961; From (Miss) Mary Bennett to Hyland, February 20, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49; "Southern Bishops Carry 'Torch Of Integration,'" clipping from *The Register* [n.p.], February 26, 1961, Bishop Hyland Scrapbook, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁹⁰ From Hyland to Very Rev. Msgr. John E. Kelly, Bureau of Information, NCWC, Washington, D.C. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

based on race. But that did not mean that whites had to treat blacks as social equals. Indeed, that they would be expected to grant blacks full equality was a relatively new concept. The Church had condoned segregation for decades, and slavery since before the advent of Jim Crow. White Catholics could understandably inquire what had changed so suddenly.

By the early 1960s the Church found itself poised at the brink of a new era, prefigured in part by Foley and the Georgia and South Carolina bishops. The image of the Church as institutional and hierarchical, uniting a disparate population under a central authority was disappearing. In its place appeared the notion of the Church as the "people of God," united by the Mystical Body of Christ.⁹¹ The Second Vatican Council, the first session of which Pope John XXIII convened in 1962, would validate this new image of the Church. Not all Catholics readily accepted conciliar changes, however. Southern white Catholics viewed them as threats to their racial status quo. The hierarchy upon which they relied to sustain segregation slowly crumbled beneath them.

⁹¹ See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*.

CHAPTER 5
"SOMEONE WAS NOT PRACTICING WHAT THEY WERE PREACHING":
CIVIL RIGHTS IN ALABAMA IN THE MID-1960S: THE CHALLENGE TO
ORTHODOXY

Father Foley and the southern bishops' statements against racism suggested that the Catholic Church in the South still had seemingly insurmountable obstacles to overcome in order to break down barriers for racial justice in the 1960s. At the very least, Foley and his ideological peers had challenged the moral convictions of other white Catholics and urged them to apply Christian principles to issues of racial justice.¹ But events in the 1960s revealed the extent to which Catholics in Alabama and Georgia were still negotiating the boundaries between their subculture and society at large. Whereas before they were outsiders, members of a "group apart" because of their Catholicism, now white Catholics were insiders because of their support for the racial status quo. Protected by gradualist priests and bishops, many white laity refused to acknowledge the immorality of the social system that had been in place for almost one hundred years. If they did concede that it was a moral issue, whites still preferred that

¹ On American Catholics' respectable, if not spectacular, progress in race relations by the mid-1960s, see Osborne, *The Segregated Covenant: Race Relations and American Catholics*. Osborne argues that all Catholic institutions in the country were ostensibly open to African Americans, even if whites and blacks still did not gladly engage in fully integrated activities. There remained de facto segregation, however, and Osborne questioned the moral authority of the Church to lead in racial justice issues.

the Church merely follow society at large and not take the lead. Their opposition to integration cemented their insider status.

Complicating the social situation for southern Catholics was the convergence of the civil rights movement with the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. This union of events presented southern Catholics with a unique, sometimes troublesome challenge. The social order and faith with which most were quite comfortable both underwent unsettling changes. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., African Americans asserted their constitutional right to the vote and demanded an end to separate but equal educational and public facilities. Under the guidance of Pope John XXIII and his successor Paul VI, the Roman church in effect reinvented itself, dramatically altering the liturgy and redefining the very nature of the Church. That these events occurred simultaneously is surely coincidence, but their convergence suggested to many southern Catholics that something was amiss in their world. They believed that liturgical and racial reforms forced them to choose sides: either accept the racial segregation that characterized southern society or embrace the renewed, modern Church. White Catholics in Alabama and Georgia only reluctantly supported their church's emphasis on and broader conception of social justice and individual liberty, preferring instead the gradualism of a pre-conciliar Catholicism that made it easier to procrastinate on issues of racial discrimination.

But the story is even more complex than opposition to or support for the racial status quo. Racial reform and the Second Vatican Council revealed fault lines within the Church and left in their wake divisions between white and black, liberal and

conservative, prelate and laymen. In addition, they reveal that the Catholic Church's history in the South does not fit neatly into categories of progressive and reactionary. Within the Catholic tradition lay impulses for both types of responses. Indeed, at times liberal and conservative tendencies grew from the same Church traditions. During the 1960s, Catholics underwent a crisis of authority. The merging of conciliar and racial reform, therefore, complicated southern Catholics' understanding of orthodoxy and authority. Catholic traditionalists believed the Council had sidetracked the One True Church into modernism. But unlike Protestant fundamentalists, they lacked the institutional support necessary to leave the Church in open revolt. Instead, Catholic conservatives longed for a restoration of Tridentine Catholicism, a return to the pre-conciliar, insular church.²

This struggle took place within the Church itself and not, as with Protestant fundamentalists, between splinter groups and the mainstream denomination. The crisis of the 1960s set Catholic against Catholic, and the tension in the South encompassed spiritual and racial issues. In many ways Archbishop Toolen reflected the anxiety within the Alabama Church as the modern South developed. As the spiritual leader of a missionary diocese, he orchestrated a respectable increase in Catholic population and built churches, schools, and hospitals over the course of his forty-two-year reign. Jealous of his authority, Toolen embodied the orthodoxy that so many white southerners craved at mid-century. Firmly entrenched in the pre-Vatican Council Church, Toolen intended his authority to go unquestioned, and many of the Church's white

² R. Scott Appleby, "The Fundamentalism of the Enclave: Catholic and Protestant Oppositional Movements in the United States," in *New Dimensions in American Religious History: Essays In Honor of*

communicants were comfortable in the spiritual and social hierarchy of traditional Catholicism. Toolen provided a fascinating study in apparent contradictions. He was at once racist and paternalistic, and yet mindful of the Church's spiritual obligations to African Americans and aware of the Church's position on social justice policy that was supposed to preclude any racism and unequal treatment of blacks by whites. Bishops Francis Hyland of Atlanta and Thomas J. McDonough of Savannah--and Hyland's successor Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan--were a younger generation, secure in their authority and willing to press the bounds of southern orthodoxy by applying the Church's social ethic to racial justice issues.

Tension over the Church's temporal and spiritual authority was particularly acute in Alabama. With a few exceptions, Church leaders there did not see the need to oppose segregation actively--or even to eliminate it right away. If they did see that need, their precarious position in southern society made such opposition risky. But as the 1960s unfolded they realized that the civil rights and anti-civil rights movements threatened to upset the region's delicate social and racial balance. From a white Catholic perspective, the threat to social stability was a serious issue. Following Governor George Wallace's infamous "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" 1963 inaugural address, eleven Birmingham clergymen released an appeal for moderation in the state's race relations. Among these clerics was the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham's auxiliary bishop Joseph A. Durick, who signed with the approval of Archbishop Toolen. The statement acknowledged the apprehension over--

even hostility to—court-ordered school desegregation but counseled that “defiance is neither the right answer nor the solution.” The moderate to liberal clergymen urged respect for law and order and reminded Alabamians that every human being is “created in the image of God and is entitled to respect as a fellow human being with all basic rights, privileges and responsibilities which belong to humanity.”³ Later that year Durick signed a similar appeal to the city’s African-American inhabitants, urging them to forego demonstrations in favor of a “peaceful Birmingham.”⁴ Speaking in Atlanta, the president of St. Bernard College, the Benedictine institution in Cullman, Alabama, took a less conciliatory tone. Father Brian Egan, O.S.B., attacked the “racial demagoguery which my home state of Alabama is witnessing today.” He agreed with the Birmingham ministers that in race relations, “as in all matters of human relations, the place of prudence is of utmost importance.”⁵

Other Catholics accepted the need to maintain a properly arranged social order, but disagreed that this should preclude civil rights activism. After all, they reasoned, adherence to Church doctrine should lead one to practice spiritual and social equality. Rev. Roland Inkel, pastor of St. Theresa’s of Midfield, Alabama, decried the “vacuum

³ “Alabama Religious Heads Warn Pro-Segregationists,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 24, 1963, p. 3.

⁴ “Negro Citizenry Urged To Withdraw Support From Racial Demonstrators,” *The Catholic Week*, April 19, 1963, p. 1. The Josephite pastor of Our Lady of Fatima in Birmingham, Fr. Paul Downey, prepared students for potential sit-ins there. He instructed high schools students that the best way they could assist those college students participating in the sit-ins “and the rest of their people would be by staying away, but supporting them by prayer.” One nun later remembered, “And I do recall we did take time to pray. And it was a very serious and tense time.” Transcription of interview with Sister Carleta Rausch, S.N.D., by Sister Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., February 10, 1993. Transcribed by John J.P. O’Brien. Oral History Project, Box 3, Envelope 6, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

⁵ “Scores Racial Demagoguery,” *The Catholic Week*, May 17, 1963, p. 5.

created by our lack of positive action in the present race question.” Segregation may continue, Father Roland averred, but at the very least “the Negro is a person worthy of respect.” To be sure, society would always contain “masters and the servants, Officers and the privates, those in authority and those subject to authority.” But most southern whites were “hiding behind the valid sanction of ordered society,” thereby using laws “which are enacted for the protection of all . . . for the enforcement of disrespect for the person of our Negro Citizens.” “Respect for the person” would be the foundation for the achievement of civil rights, Roland concluded, and would be the means for the peaceful solution to the present crisis.⁶ Roland’s claim that “respect” would do for civil rights what demonstrations and direct action could not was hardly inflammatory, but his harsh criticism of Catholics’ “ostrich-like” behavior drew a response from Durick in the following week’s issue of the diocesan newspaper. Durick defended the Church’s racial progress and argued that all priests and “informed laity” knew that segregation was morally wrong. The ecclesiastical exchange revealed much in common between the priest and auxiliary bishop. Bishop Durick emphasized that any further progress must not come at the expense of the white community, but he too believed that “reason and understanding” would ultimately solve the problem.⁷

On Sunday morning, September 15, 1963, a bomb ripped through an outside wall of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church of Birmingham, where African-American

⁶ Rev. Roland J.P.-M Inkel, Midfield, AL, Letter to the Editor, *The Catholic Week*, May 24, 1963, p. 7. Two other letters in the same issue also criticized the Church for its unwillingness to take a firm stance in favor of integration.

⁷ “Bishop Durick Discusses Race Issue Solution,” *The Catholic Week*, May 31, 1963, p. 1.

church members had already congregated for the 11:00 service. The blast killed four young girls.⁸ Archbishop Toolen broke his customary silence and issued a pastoral letter condemning the violence and the detrimental effects it had on Birmingham's business and industry and on the state's image before the rest of the world. Toolen minced no words in condemning this "shameful act." He professed disbelief that "a civilized human being could have in his heart so much hatred for a fellow human being as to desire or want to destroy life because a man's color is different from his own." Toolen's statement largely ignored the racial situation that prompted the bombings in the first place. Instead, he naively prayed there would be none "of our Catholic people with hatred in their hearts for their negro brethren." But if there were, he warned, they should "pluck this hatred out of their hearts and remember that all men are created equal, all are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." In fact, not only was salvation available to Negroes, but somehow "their souls may be much whiter and more pure than those seeking to destroy them."⁹ In his reaction to the 1963 Birmingham bombing, Toolen espoused his standard line that all were God's children and should be treated as such. This did not necessarily mean that segregation should come to an immediate end, however. Instead, in his typical paternalistic manner, the archbishop believed that platitudes and doctrinal reminders would gradually break down the racial barriers separating whites and blacks.

⁸ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), pp. 889-892; and idem, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), pp. 137-138.

⁹ Letter from Toolen to My dearly beloved Priests and People, September 17, 1963. Toolen papers.

Prior to the mid-1960s, Toolen could point with pride to his diocese's record of evangelism among the state's African-American population. The extension of the Church outside the boundaries of white society made Toolen vulnerable to white hostility (or so he argued). But the archbishop's concern for black souls resulted from his--and the rest of the Church's--pre-Vatican II conviction that the road to heaven led strictly through Rome. To be sure, including African Americans in the Catholic fold was never meant to imply social equality. But in defense of his diocese's racial progress, Toolen repeatedly alleged that there never was segregation in his diocese and all institutions were ostensibly open to blacks. In fact, in 1965 he wrote Baltimore's Lawrence Cardinal Shehan that "We have never had segregation in our churches. All our organizations are integrated, and have been over the years." Toolen had worked "38 years . . . with and for the negroes, building churches, schools, convents and rectories so that they might have the same opportunity as the whites."¹⁰ Toolen's defensive posture revealed how blind he was to the social plight of African Americans and the pressure he was under to use his authority to bring about racial reform. He resisted that pressure and many Alabama--indeed many southern --white Catholics took their cue from the Mobile prelate.

African-American Catholics, on the other hand, were encouraged by nuns and priests who proved to be more sympathetic to their plight. Mary Hill, a Birmingham African American who converted to Catholicism in 1953, enjoyed a few atypical integrated events. But she understood how rare her experiences were. In the late 1950s,

¹⁰ Letter from Toolen to Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, Baltimore, April 22, 1965. Toolen papers.

Hill participated in an interracial women's retreat in Cullman, Alabama. She traveled to the retreat with "two Caucasian ladies" and even shared a room with one of them. "I know that they had good feelings about me, and I had good feelings about them," Hill recalled. What was more, white nuns treated African Americans with a respect not normally shown blacks in the South. "And the sisters gave us a sense of worth. . . . They would address us as Mr. or Mrs. And here, we just weren't addressed that way. . . . It was either Auntie or Uncle or your first name or whatever. And if you didn't have that innate worthiness within, well, you just didn't feel good about yourself." Hill's positive experiences were isolated, however. "In lieu of the Church's stand on desegregation," she remembered, "I experienced an undercurrent of staunch segregation which was totally alien to church doctrine. In other words, someone was not practicing what they were preaching."¹¹

The most revealing accounts of division within the Church come from those black Catholics who were firmly attached to their faith but felt alienated from the Church's leadership. The Knights of Peter Claver was the colored counterpart to the Knights of Columbus, Catholic fraternal orders established to provide alternatives to secular groups such as the Masons.¹² The Peter Claver order had been established at Most Pure Heart of Mary parish in Mobile in 1909, and often held its annual national meetings there. The 1960s revealed tension between the colored Knights and

¹¹ Transcript of interview with Mrs. Mary Hill, by Sister Rose Sevenich, O.S.F., March 9, 1993. Transcribed by John J.P. O'Brien; and Mary S. Hill, "Holy Family Elementary School, 1937-1977. A Brief Historical Survey and Comment." Oral History Project, Box 3, Envelope 8, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

¹² Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, pp. 235-237.

Archbishop Toolen. This group had been patronized and segregated long enough. The quickening pace of the civil rights movement and Rome's increasing concern about racism within the Church made acquiescence to Toolen's gradualism less and less palatable.

The Gulf Coast Conference of the Knights of St. Peter Claver held their 1963 meeting in Mobile, and issued a resolution that they forwarded to Toolen. At the same time, they requested a meeting with the archbishop "to discuss racial and other Diocese matters with you at your convenience."¹³ The Peter Claver delegates revealed a keen awareness of the nascent (in Alabama) post-World War II Catholic social ethic and employed images of an organic society that would become standard fare following the end of Vatican II. Conference attendees were quick to distance themselves from "pressure groups" or "outside extremists." Instead, they placed themselves firmly within a Catholic tradition that was attentive to human needs and still conducive to social harmony. They were motivated by "that zeal that makes one his 'brother's keeper' and respondent to individual duties and precious opportunities of cooperative service that will bring stability and peace."

The conference noted that the rate of converts among Negroes had decreased recently, and those areas that did show a healthy convert rate were places "where the Church has taken the lead in the area of race relations." Indeed, the "Catholicity of the Church" was what drew black converts in the first place, since Catholicism "is in harmony with his urgent needs and rights for social acceptance." Following the

¹³ Letter from James B. Johnson, Birmingham, AL to Toolen, May 17, 1963. Toolen papers.

reasoning of Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and the examples of several American archbishops and Cardinals, the colored Knights noted how racism violated the "Mystical Body of Christ" and ran contrary to the universality of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴

Another 1963 incident demonstrates the tension within the Alabama diocese surrounding the Church's official teaching on social justice and equal access to the sacraments and the way in which the Church supported the social status quo. On Sunday morning, September 22, Eddie English, "one of our fine colored Catholics here in Mobile," tried to attend mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, a white parish in Orrville, Alabama. Some of the male members of the church, however, refused English admission to the mass, which was scheduled to start in less than thirty minutes. According to English, the men stopped him and his party (how many were with him is unknown), with the query, "Where are you going?" "To Mass," came the reply. The men evidently believed the Mobilian had more sinister intentions than worship, for their next question was, "What do you want here[?]" Whatever answer they received was not satisfactory. Again according to English: "They then told us they helped build that church with money of members of the church and we should go 15 miles to Selma to Mass, because we would start a racial incident, if they let us attend that church." English and his group from Mobile missed mass that Sunday when they arrived in Selma too late for services.¹⁵

¹⁴ Annual Meeting of Gulf Coast Conference of the Knights of St. Peter Claver, May 5, 1963. Toolen papers.

¹⁵ Letter from Eddie L. English, Mobile, AL to Toolen, September 23, 1963. Toolen papers.

That English expected to attend mass in the presumably all-white church is noteworthy. Perhaps he anticipated being forced to sit in the back pews and having to wait to receive Communion after the white communicants. But even attending a biracial worship service was enough to raise eyebrows in small Orrville, or in any area--rural or urban--throughout the state. Certainly, no group of blacks would have shown up at First Baptist Church of any town in Alabama expecting to be admitted without question. English expressed his own righteous indignation to Archbishop Toolen in a letter the next day. English's concerns revolved around the image of the Church such an incident presented to non-Catholics. Unlike the white members of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, English's primary consideration was that such racial separation would tarnish the Church's image as a force for integration and racial justice. Toolen himself shared a similar anxiety. He immediately wrote the chapel's priest, instructing Father Thomas Lorigan to "tell the people of Orrville that it is a Catholic Church and belongs to all our people and that if such a thing happens again I will close the church."¹⁶

Father Lorigan read Toolen's letter during the September 29 mass. The white communicants of Immaculate Conception were surprised at their ordinary's swift, decisive reaction to such a volatile issue. One parishioner complained to Toolen that forcing integration would jeopardize the position in society that the Catholic Church--especially the very small group in Orrville--had worked hard to attain. Whites at the Church of the Immaculate Conception feared that English's attempt to attend mass was

¹⁶ Letter from Toolen to Rev. Thomas Lorigan, Selma, AL, September 24, 1963. See also Letter from Toolen to English, September 24, 1963. Toolen papers.

a carefully staged event, with worship and reception of the sacraments of less concern than their church being made an example for all to see. Joseph McHugh agreed that “we are not altogether right by any means,” but in his mind that did not justify being forced to integrate at the expense of community order.¹⁷

McHugh expressed what was surely on the minds of many--if not most--of the white Catholics in Orrville. They had already suffered for their faith and worried that if the Church encouraged too much racial progress, their burden would only grow heavier. McHugh wrote to Toolen, “Here we are, born Catholic and raised Catholic in a very small community where we have had to fight poverty, anti-Catholicism, discrimination of our children in public schools, competition with non-Catholic business associates and the general tribulations of being a Catholic in everyday life in an [*sic*] Protestant atmosphere.” A cotton ginner, McHugh’s financial security was intimately connected to the area’s agricultural economy, and, like other Catholic businessmen in the Protestant South, he found himself in a precarious position. The Klan and Citizens’ Council had already pressured him to stay within proper racial boundaries in his business dealings. But McHugh also knew that “there are many [*sic*] many colored families dependent on the operation of my business for their livelihood.” In McHugh’s mind, so long as all parties involved respected racial boundaries, everyone benefited and none suffered adversely.¹⁸

¹⁷ Letter from Joseph I. McHugh, Orrville, AL. to Toolen, September 29, 1963. Toolen papers.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

Archbishop Toolen was sympathetic to McHugh's dilemma, but in this instance the doctrines of the Church were not to be trifled with, in Toolen's mind. In his response to McHugh, Toolen reiterated his claim that no church in the diocese had ever been segregated and that "all Catholics are welcome in every church in our Diocese no matter what their color." Toolen pointed to the community of faith within which all Catholics were supposed to dwell and expressed shock that a fellow Catholic would turn a man away from the sacraments. As if to console McHugh and make the situation a bit more palatable, Toolen admitted that the early 1960s was "a time of stress and strife" and the situation in Selma was "very bad," a fact that could be partially blamed on one of the Edmundites.¹⁹ But, he argued, that did not change the fact that as Catholics they were beholden to higher principles. Citing Jesus' biblical answer to the question about the greatest commandment--"Love God and Love your Neighbor"--Toolen indicated that, "whether we like it or not, the negroes are our neighbors."²⁰

Toolen certainly had the authority to close the small Orrville church. Besides the ecclesiastical authority that provided the archbishop with the ability to remove priests from any particular location and to check errant parishioners, in most cases the diocese provided the financial support to build churches and to keep small parishes like Immaculate Conception operating. And the archbishop controlled the purse strings.

¹⁹ Toolen does not say, but he probably meant Rev. Maurice Ouellette, a civil rights activist and head of the Edmundite mission in Selma in the early 1960s. Toolen tolerated the independent priest for a while, but in 1965 ordered him out of the diocese. See Eagles, *Outside Agitator*, pp. 67-68.

²⁰ Letter from Toolen to McHugh, October 2, 1963. Toolen papers.

But the authority of the bishop himself was not at issue.²¹ Indeed, whether they agreed with him or not, few people in Orrville would have questioned Toolen's authority over their church. Rather, the Eddie English incident revealed that the issue was the Catholic Church's relationship to southern society. Like most of their white Protestant neighbors, Immaculate Conception's parishioners had made peace with the southern status quo. They had assumed, moreover, that their Church would not challenge that status quo. For English himself, the issue was obviously very different, and the contrast between what whites and blacks expected from their church points to the irony of the Church's position. Both English and the white members of Immaculate Conception worried about the Church's image, although for very different reasons. On the one hand, English saw the Catholic Church as best situated to lead the way in racial reform. For whites, on the other hand, the Church was best positioned to protect the southern way of life and forestall integration.

McHugh's concern that English's visit to Immaculate Conception had been staged to pressure local white Catholics was not unreasonable. Indeed, a 1964 incident in Selma reveals both the confrontational measures used to integrate southern churches and the violence whites would employ to maintain proper racial boundaries and protect the sacred space of the segregated parish. One Sunday in late 1964, six African-American men had entered the Church of the Assumption, a white parish in Selma, for mass. Rather than sitting together, each man sat in a separate pew and, according to the

²¹ In Louisiana in 1962, Archbishop of New Orleans Joseph Francis Rummel excommunicated three white Catholics who resisted his order to integrate parochial schools. See Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet*, p. 43.

pastor of the church, refused "to budge to allow anyone easy entrance in the pews."

Once outside the church, the men were assaulted, by whom it is unclear. Sgt. James O. Burk, an Assumption parishioner, intervened on the young men's behalf and defended the integration of the Church.

Burk's stand for racial justice was costly. He and his family received threatening telephone calls, and in December three men came to Burk's home, lured him outside, and assaulted him. The pastor of the Church of the Assumption was reluctant to lay sole blame for the attack on racial issues. "There may be overtones of the integration problem, since the three thugs who attacked Sgt. Burke are supposed to have made remarks about his integrationist views while they were beating him up in front of his home." But Father Charles F. Auconi surely was merely aping the police line, when he reported to Archbishop Toolen that Wilson Baker, Selma's Director of Public Safety and no friend to the civil rights movement, "intimated to me that Sgt. Burke also has a penchant for gambling." Selma police were not ruling this out as motive for the assault as well.²² In August 1965 Auconi reported the "current situation" at the Church of the Assumption. He and his parish were doing considerably better than critics would allow, he asserted, and he listed the recent attendance figures with the acid tone of someone claiming overdue vindication. In July African-American mass attendance at

²² Letter from Mrs. M.B. Tidwell, Selma to Toolen, December 31, 1964; "Three Men Are Held In Connection With Beating of Soldier," undated, unidentified newspaper clipping in Toolen papers, 1964; Letter from Father Charles F. Auconi, Selma to Toolen, January 2, 1965. Toolen papers. See also, Letter to the Editor, Mrs. M.B. Tidwell, December 29, 1964, n.d., no publication, in Toolen papers.

Assumption parish averaged fifty-four per Sunday, with a high of seventy-four on July 4.²³

The Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham's missionary status had made Alabama's Catholics dependent on financial help from northern-based mission groups. And unlike the Baptists and Methodists that predominated in the South, there was no independent regional Catholic denomination. The fortunes of the Church in Alabama were intimately connected to the universal Church. By the early 1960s, Catholic leaders had developed an ethic of racial justice and took bolder stands against segregation.²⁴ *The Catholic Week*, for example, regularly ran syndicated news stories and columns sympathetic to the civil rights movement, and the periodical's editorial stance elicited requests from readers not to receive the paper.²⁵ This undeniable association with nonsouthern churchpeople who had begun to take a moral stand against racism and segregation rankled not a few southern white Catholics.

One particularly offensive piece came from several Wisconsin diocesan newspapers--but reprinted in the Mobile organ--in which a Catholic theologian argued that a Catholic cannot in good conscience vote for an "admitted segregationist." Racism is an evil, Father John T. O'Connor argued, made even more "repugnant" when one considers the Mystical Body of Christ and the Church's teaching of the "fundamental

²³ Letter from Auconi to Toolen, August 4, 1965. Toolen papers.

²⁴ See, for example, "Bishop Urges Vatican Declaration on Racism," *The Catholic Week*, March 26, 1965, p. 1.

²⁵ See, for example, Msgr. J.D. Conway, "Does the Bible Condemn Integration?" *The Catholic Week*, January 3, 1964, p. 7; Msgr. J.D. Conway, "Civil Rights Program Communistic?" *The Catholic Week*, February 28, 1964, p. 7; "Civil Rights Legislation," *The Catholic Week*, April 3, 1964.

unity of the human race."²⁶ O'Connor wrote his treatise following Alabama Governor George Wallace's success in the Wisconsin Democratic primaries, and many white Catholics in Alabama took the attack on their governor personally. The racism-as-moral-wrong argument fit neither their political experiences with Wallace nor their understanding of the universality of the Catholic faith. One Montgomery Catholic used to be "proud" to be a Catholic because the Church "has stuck to religion and left the other issues alone." Morality had nothing to do with public affairs; instead, it was a personal issue. A Birmingham man conceded that Negroes were just "as good and human as anyone else," when their "laxity of morals" was not in evidence. For this white correspondent the clergy had stepped "beyond the limits of their religious duties" by telling Catholics how to vote.²⁷

Another particularly astute observer who also wanted his name removed from the paper's mailing listed noted that *The Catholic Week* would never have assumed the role of civil rights advocate prior to the 1960s. "[Y]our conviction in this matter," Madison Jones of Auburn wrote, "has an antiquity of less than a decade." Jones described his vision of the organic nature of society; therefore, he reasoned, "charity does not result from the manipulations of social engineering." Rather, it follows from "the thousand interwoven threads of consciousness, feeling and memory creating a social body." Segregation and its concomitant social relationships created ample

²⁶ Father John T. O'Connor, S.C.J., S.T.D., "Wisconsin Catholic Papers On Wallace," *The Catholic Week*, March 27, 1964, p. 6.

²⁷ Our Readers Speak, "C.W. Reader Disappointed," Vincent B. Mauser, Montgomery, AL, *The Catholic Week*, June 26, 1964, p. 6; "Disagrees With Theologian On Evil Of Segregation," *The Catholic Week*, April 3, 1964, p. 7.

opportunities for charity. “[D]emolishing a central social institution [segregation],” moreover, would cause incalculable damage, especially if civil rights activists were “determined, and confident that we have the power, to set things right at once.” Social institutions such as segregation were more apt to “transmute themselves according to the pressures of time,” a gradualist approach favored by many other white southerners.²⁸

Probably the social institution most intimately connected with a segregated South was the school system, which whites protected with single-minded zealotry. Segregation boundaries fell along gender fault lines, and rigid separation occurred in those institutions—like schools—in which whites would be most in danger of socially intimate contact with blacks. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision directly attacked this precious social institution, but whites rallied to maintain the racial status quo well into the 1960s.²⁹ Indeed, ten years after *Brown* many segregationists believed that they had won that battle and thwarted integration indefinitely. With the election of Governor George Wallace in 1962 and his vow to defend segregation at all costs, white Alabamians were assured that racial boundaries would be protected. White Catholics could be equally as confident. Other Church leaders had become increasingly vocal in their opposition to segregation, and a couple of the bishops of other southern states vowed to integrate parochial schools; but their

²⁸ Our Readers Speak, “Reader Appalled At CW Liberalism,” Madison Jones, Auburn, AL, *The Catholic Week*, May 29, 1964, p. 6.

²⁹ On the relationship between gender and segregation, see Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 139-140. On the white backlash against the *Brown* decision, see Klarman, “How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis.”

own bishop, Toolen, could be trusted not to waiver in the face of public pressure to integrate.

But by 1962 demands for integration came increasingly from blacks themselves. That summer Pensacola schools were on the verge of admitting blacks, a possibility that upset that city's African-American Catholic population. In their minds, their church lagged behind the public schools, an embarrassing development for those concerned about the Church's moral and spiritual image. Charles R. Benboe, the president of the Holy Name Society at St. Joseph's parish in Pensacola wrote the archbishop that he had been "very much humiliated and concerned heretofore about the fact that our Catholic schools were separated because of race." That situation, however, was "tolerable, distasteful though it was, when all the other schools in the area were the same." Benboe implored Toolen to "consider the image of the Church in this community and to do what is in your power to restore the rightful order of things."³⁰

Others expressed similar emotions and concern for the image of the Catholic Church among that city's African-American non-Catholic population. Lawrence MeVoy wrote out of "loyalty and devotion to our church." He decried the local Church's protection of "something which we claim to abhor" and lamented "the comments being made about our silence on the subject of school integration in Pensacola." He noted that white non-Catholics attended parochial schools, while Negro Catholics were deprived of the same privilege. "We say there is no such things as

³⁰ Letter from Charles R. Benboe, Pensacola, FL. to Toolen, July 10, 1962. Toolen papers.

White Catholic and Negro Catholic, but we practice something different."³¹ Willie Collins identified himself as "a conscientious [*sic*], faithful Catholic of Negro parentage," who had "never been a rabble-rouser or a troublemaker." He also referred to the "unfavorable light the Church is in in Pensacola at this time" because of its failure to integrate ahead of the public schools.³² Handwritten on each letter is the simple word, "acknowledged," so Toolen probably made no substantive response to these Pensacola letters--if he did, that correspondence has not survived. The archbishop was not one to indulge criticism, but his terse replies could have reflected a growing realization on his part that these black parishioners were correct. He would have to act sooner rather than later.

Pressure also came from some of the religious orders who staffed the Negro parochial schools. In 1962 Toolen reported to the Provincial of the Daughters of Charity that his diocese had already lost two communities "for no reason except they did not want to teach the colored and didn't want a small school."³³ A refusal to teach black students more than likely was not the issue, although Toolen tended to understand multifaceted racial issues that simply. In all probability, those communities (Toolen does not indicate which ones) withdrew for some of the same reasons that the Daughters of Charity considered leaving in 1964. Segregation was quickly becoming outdated,

³¹ Letter from Lawrence McVoy, Pensacola, FL to Toolen, July 23, 1962. Toolen papers.

³² Letter from Willie Collins, Pensacola, FL to Toolen, June 30, 1962; see also, Letter from Dr. Simon William Boyd, D.D.S., Pensacola to Toolen, May 18, 1962. Toolen papers.

³³ Letter from Toolen to Sister Mary Rose, Daughters of Charity, Normandy, MO, August 4, 1962. For other examples, see Mother Mary Barromea, S.N.D., Covington, KY to Toolen, February 10, 1966; and Toolen to Rev. J.B. Tenny, Washington, D.C., August 29, 1967. Toolen papers.

and religious orders devoted to both colored mission work and service to the Church could no longer rationalize maintaining separate facilities for blacks and whites. Sister Mary Rose of the Daughters of Charity wrote Toolen in February 1964 that "our Council feels we should reconsider the wisdom of staffing an all-Colored School." The order hoped to continue serving African Americans, "but with the emphasis on integration from all sources--from the Federal government and civil groups and above all from the Church itself, it seems to us that we would be doing a disservice rather than promoting the over-all good of the Church in this instance."³⁴

Toolen expressed shock at the prospect of losing the Daughters of Charity over segregation issues. By that time he undoubtedly saw the inevitability of integration, but he remained unconvinced that more than a few blacks actually desired it and doubted that it would ever be widespread in the South. Ignoring almost every piece of correspondence he had received from African Americans on the subject, Toolen claimed that "the children prefer to go to these schools rather than go to another section of town in a white school. They belong in their own parish school." Toolen conceded that integration "must come and more than likely will come to the Diocese of Mobile in September, but that isn't going to change our colored schools in the least." Parochial schools for African Americans gave them a Catholic education, Toolen explained, although he failed to clarify why integrated schools deprived them of that same opportunity. Toolen concluded his response to Sister Mary Rose by relying on a now

³⁴ Letter from Sister Mary Rose, Marillac Provincial House, St. Louis, MO to Toolen, February 11, 1964. Toolen papers.

familiar refrain: she was an outsider--"from your far off city of St. Louis"--who could not understand the situation in Alabama.³⁵

Even before official diocesan-wide integration, at least one parochial school in Alabama opened on an integrated basis. Huntsville's St. Joseph's school differed, however, in its racial composition. It was a previously all-black school with a handful of white students--"reverse integration" of sorts, as parishioners referred to it. St. Joseph's opened in Huntsville in 1952 to serve Huntsville's growing black population. Beginning in the mid-1950s, a few whites attended with the predominantly African-American congregation. In September 1963, a couple of days before Governor George Wallace made his infamous stand in the schoolhouse door at the University of Alabama, twelve white students joined 106 black pupils at St. Joseph's school. Father Mark Sterbenz, S.D.S., reported that integration at St. Joseph's progressed "very quietly and very smoothly." The mother of one of the white children recalled that the event was "not just peaceful, but warm, welcoming and comfortable." The impetus for the white enrollment came from parents themselves, and the priest had "no objection whatever." The NCWC news service reported that "the white pupils were enrolled without incident."³⁶

³⁵ Letter from Toolen to Sister Mary Rose, St. Louis, MO, March 10, 1964. Toolen papers.

³⁶ Transcript of St. Joseph's, Huntsville, Video on the 43rd Anniversary of Founding. Transcribed by John J.P. O'Brien. Oral History Project, Box 3 Envelope 4; Isabelle Marrero, *The History of St. Joseph's Catholic Community, 1952-1992*. Archives of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama; "Parochial School Degregated [sic]," *The Georgia Bulletin*, September 12, 1963, p. 2; Lovett, *The Catholic Church in the Deep South*, pp. 191-192. In the sources, Father Sterbenz's name was also spelled "Sturbenz" in the *Georgia Bulletin* news story. Since Rose Gibbons Lovett had access to both written records and oral interviews, I have elected to use her spelling.

Bowing to inevitability, Toolen announced--in a terse pastoral letter with minimal explanation--on April 26, 1964, that "After much prayer, consultation, and advice, we have decided to integrate all the schools of our diocese in September." The archbishop encouraged Alabama's Catholics to accept the decision "as best for God and Country . . . the common good of all must come first."³⁷ Toolen announced that the diocesan superintendent of schools and pastors would determine admission procedures. In Pensacola the year before, white diocesan schools had gradually begun to admit black students, beginning with students in grades one through four, and grades nine and ten.³⁸ But the week following Toolen's 1964 integration announcement, Monsignor J. Edwin Stuardi, school superintendent, placed no such stipulations on the admission of African-American students to formerly all-white schools.

Admission to diocesan schools would be according to previously published guidelines. That is, for elementary schools, students would apply to the principal for enrollment, and the parish pastor would then review each application and make acceptance or rejection decisions on an individual basis. High schools "will admit that quality of student who will profit most from the school program and the number of students that available space and the school program will best serve." Students' elementary school record, performance on a placement test, and recommendations of elementary school teachers, principals, and pastors would help determine "that quality

³⁷ Toolen pastoral letter, April 22, 1964 [to be read April 26, 1964]. Toolen papers.

³⁸ Letter from Toolen to Mr. and Mrs. Cecil T. Hunter, Pensacola, FL, June 11, 1963. Toolen papers.

of student who would profit most."³⁹ Such a policy of admitting students on an individual case-by-case basis was standard fare in the educational systems of the post-Brown South. This eliminated race as an explicit factor in admission, but it still gave tremendous latitude to white school boards and other officials to exclude black students from formerly white schools.⁴⁰ There is no explicit evidence that this is what the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham intended with their 1964 policy. But, given the nature of white southern society, the knowledge that this happened in school systems throughout the South, and the fact that it took several years for diocesan schools to achieve integration, it cannot be ruled out.

Diocesan-wide school integration came slowly and depended on local circumstances. It was the late 1960s before Alabama parochial schools achieved even a modicum of integration, but Toolen's announcement prompted the predictable reaction from whites. One "native Mobilian and a Catholic born into the faith" did not "intend to have my children schooled with negroes." Catherine West was "a segregationist, not a racist," who believed that African Americans could have "equal rights but separate facilities." West was certain she was not alone in her thinking. Parochial school integration violated "the teachings of the past 2,000 years." But given time and "God's

³⁹ "Diocesan Superintendent Announces Procedure For Admission Of All Students," *The Catholic Week*, May 1, 1964, p. 1; "Msgr. Stuardi States Policy For Admission to Diocesan High Schools," *The Catholic Week*, March 6, 1964, p. 1.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, pp. 234-264.

will this battle will be won peacably and our way of life will continue with our Catholic children in Catholic schools."⁴¹

Another Alabama woman provoked by the bishop's 1964 pastoral letter announced that "As a Catholic I do not approve of the church mixing in politics." Viola Johnson conflated potential school integration with the civil rights demonstrations she watched on television. They were both products of the same alien forces and had no place within the Church. Johnson conceded that "Negroes has [*sic*] always been excepted [*sic*] in all catholic churches." But she did not approve of priests and nuns "incouraging [*sic*] these demonstrations," and she blamed "the head of the church for allowing these things to happen." Despite her displeasure with her ordinary, Johnson's letter sounded a theme that should have been familiar to Toolen--namely, that blacks were not ready to accept the responsibility that accompanied their demands for equal rights. She had no "Quarrels with the negroes," who needed the assistance of whites. She was opposed to what she perceived as African Americans being granted a position in society that they had not earned. "Violence and demonstrations is [*sic*] not the answer."⁴²

Johnson also hints at a spiritual transformation that plagued modern Christianity beginning in the 1950s and 1960s. As her denomination moved further away from what she perceived were its traditional roots, Johnson located her spirituality outside the established Church. Again, she blamed her bishop. "I am sorry to say that the head of

⁴¹ From Catherine M. West, Mobile, AL. to Toolen, April 26, 1964. Toolen papers.

⁴² From Viola Johnson, Marion Junction, AL. to Toolen, April 30, 1964. Toolen papers.

the Catholic church is turning me away from my religion, I have always been proud to say that I am a catholic. I hope and pray that God will forgive me, I am sure he will answer my prayer at home if they [sic] are sincere.” Dissatisfied with her denomination, she personalized her spirituality and retreated into a sacred world of her own creation.⁴³

For white southerners, public school integration broke down cherished barriers and provided the most serious challenge to the racial status quo. Parochial school integration provoked intense reactions, but for most Catholics it turned out not to be an immediate threat. The event that galvanized public sentiment over civil rights and the role of the Church in the South in racial justice issues was the march for voting rights from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965. Until Selma, the Catholic Church had remained on the margins of the civil rights movement in Alabama. Debates over integration had centered on internal Church affairs and not on the Church’s interaction with society at large. Support for integration--or at least moderation and “prudence” in opposing the civil rights movement--came primarily from a select few priests and church leaders. That Father Foley himself was such an isolated example of Catholic activism demonstrates the Church’s marginal presence in the movement. But Bishop Toolen’s response to the Selma demonstration quickly brought the Church into the forefront and thrust Toolen into a position he did not necessarily want.

Initially, Toolen’s voice was a responsible one of moderation. Following violence against demonstrators when the march was first attempted on March 7, the

⁴³ Ibid. On the postwar transformation of American spirituality, see Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); and idem, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

archbishop condemned "without reservation a harsh and brutal exercise of the police power vested in the hands of our public officials as beyond the requirements of present difficulties and unable to effect their solution." He argued that "justice, human decency and Christian brotherhood demand recognition of the real needs of our Negro people...." But demonstrations--even those prompted by "justice, human decency and Christian brotherhood"--had limits, in Toolen's mind, and he continued to press for gradual, not radical, methods of dealing with racial strife. In the same statement, he refused to "condone a complete disregard on the part of citizens for statutes legally enacted in the interest of the common good and public safety."⁴⁴ The latter statement suggests that Toolen was comfortable with the separate but equal statutes that propped up Alabama society. At the very least, he was reluctant to upset those whites who provided the primary support for his church.

Toolen's moderation gave way to outright reaction a week later when some thirty-five or forty priests and an uncertain number of nuns from around the country joined hundreds of other clergy and activists in defiance of a court injunction to demand equal voting rights for African Americans.⁴⁵ In an address before a banquet sponsored by the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, the Mobile prelate conceded that there were "things that need correcting" in race relations, but he denounced "crusaders" who were little more than "eager beavers who feel this is a holy cause." They were outsiders, he complained. "What do they know about conditions in the South?" Neither priests nor

⁴⁴ "Archbishop's Statement On Selma Racial Tension," *The Catholic Week*, March 12, 1965, p. 1.

⁴⁵ "Between 35 - 40 Priests At Selma," *The Catholic Week*, March 12, 1965, p. 12.

nuns, but especially the female religious, Toolen asserted, belonged in such an environment. The archbishop revealed an attitude common to white southerners who associated social unrest with the unwelcome intervention of outsiders. With statements like this, the archbishop became a spokesperson for white southern society--Catholic and Protestants alike. Instead of crusading in an unfamiliar environment, according to Toolen, priests and nuns' "place is at home doing God's work." Toolen conceded that white southerners needed "corrections in our attitudes towards the Negro people," but "sane and sensible Negroes realize we are trying to bring them up to the standards they should have." He and other right-thinking white Alabamians, that is, knew what was best for the state's African-American population. The bishop concluded that the "demonstrations are not helping," and Dr. King was merely "trying to divide the people."⁴⁶

Toolen defies neat categorization. He was not necessarily a segregationist, and he was quick to point that out whenever Church authorities or anyone else questioned his spiritual leadership. He complained to Baltimore's Cardinal Shehan that "They made a segregationist out of me and I have never been a segregationist."⁴⁷ At the very least, his March 1965 speech to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick reveals a pronounced noblesse oblige. He was a paternalist, who understood himself to be an expert on Alabama's blacks, their friend and protector since his tenure as bishop began in the 1920s. Based on pre-civil rights movement southern white standards, the archbishop

⁴⁶ "Archbishop Toolen Criticizes Presence of Priests, Sisters in Demonstrations," *The Catholic Week*, March 19, 1965, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Letter from Toolen to Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, Baltimore, MD, April 22, 1965. Toolen papers.

certainly could make a relatively strong case for describing himself as a friend and protector of his state's black population. In the days when integrated institutions were unheard of, he built schools and hospitals for African Americans and recruited religious orders to staff them. Indeed, Mobile's black Catholic hospital was the only place that African-American doctors could practice in that city. And he solicited financial help from organizations such as the Church's Indian and Negro Fund and other national Catholic mission sources.⁴⁸ Certainly, separate institutions perpetuated racial segregation and stretched Catholic resources even more thinly. But they were necessary for the Church to operate in the segregated South.

The Catholic record in Selma was more complicated than Toolen's reaction to-- and nuns' participation in--voting rights demonstrations. For Selma's Catholic African-American population in particular, SNCC's 1965 voting registration drive offered the kind of hope that the Alabama Catholic Church had failed to provide. Rachel Ann Nelson was a nine-year-old girl who attended the Edmundites' St. Elizabeth's Mission school in Selma. Rachel participated in the Selma demonstrations and later recalled her role in the march and the way the demonstrations bound the black community together. Her best friend was a Baptist. "But no matter what we were, we all went to the meetings and the rallies at the church, Brown Chapel AME Church. And Catholic priests and nuns were there, too, because the movement was above what faith you

⁴⁸ See, for example, "Work Is Started On Negro Project In Phenix City," *The Catholic Week*, June 15, 1945, p. 5; "Colored Maternity Hospital Will Be Built In Pensacola," *The Catholic Week*, November 23, 1945, p. 1; "Citizen Group Backs Plans For Catholic Hospital For Negroes," *The Catholic Week*, May 28, 1945, p. 8; "Birmingham To Have Catholic Negro High School and Hospital," *The Catholic Week*, June 25, 1948, p. 1. Langan interview with author.

were.” Nelson’s family was one of the first to provide room and board for civil rights workers who came to Selma to plan the demonstrations. The Nelsons even housed a white Presbyterian minister and his family, whose seven-year-old son attended St. Elizabeth’s school with Rachel. The white child of such an “outsider” attending a Negro school only served to further marginalize these black Catholics.

They found comfort in at least two places, however. After being attacked for walking home with the white boy, Nelson remembered imploring the statue of the Virgin Mary in her house, “Boy, Mary, if we ever needed help down here, we need it now.” The community of activists—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—also provided a sacred respite for Rachel. Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church was the central meeting site and rallying point for the voting rights drive. For Rachel, these priests and nuns were in Selma because the civil rights movement itself was far more important than which faith one adhered to. Before the demonstrations began, one of the nuns at St. Elizabeth’s told her class to pray for peace in Selma. Rachel innocently inquired “if it would be all right for me to pray at Brown Chapel even if it wasn’t a Catholic Church. She [the nun] had smiled at the question.”⁴⁹

Following the Archbishop’s St. Patrick’s Day condemnation of the Selma demonstrations, some forty or fifty members of St. Jude and St. John the Baptist Churches—two of Montgomery’s African-American parishes—signed a letter of protest to Toolen. The presence of those “outside” priests and nuns in Selma made this group

⁴⁹ Sheyann Webb and Rachel Ann Nelson, as told to Frank Sikora, *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil-Rights Days* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), pp. 142, 57, 15.

feel "for the first time that our Catholic clergy was concerned about the brute force of the local constabulary, and while they did not lead the protests, at least it was apparent that the nuns and priests objected to the injustices." Until then, "we looked in vain [for someone to protest injustices Alabama blacks suffered], for no effort or encouragement had been forthcoming." The members of St. Jude and St. John the Baptist parishes set themselves apart from Toolen and what they perceived as his lack of leadership: "So we will lick our wounds and go on to the job at hand with hope in our hearts, a prayer on our lips, and because of your statements, tears in our eyes, but the tears will not blind us to the real goal of this effort and we will welcome the nuns and priests into our hearts and homes when the pilgrimage from Selma is over."⁵⁰

The parishioners from St. Elizabeth's, Selma, also felt alienated from the mainstream of the Alabama Church. In November 1965 St. Elizabeth's Holy Name Society boycotted that year's Diocesan Holy Name Convention in protest of Toolen's stance on the Selma demonstrations. The president of the parish society, Robert Craig, wrote Toolen, describing his and the group's feeling of betrayal at the hands of their "Shepherd." Evidently, Toolen's history of support for black missions had convinced them that the bishop would come down on the side of civil rights. To their dismay, he did not. In addition, to make matters worse, in the minds of St. Elizabeth's parishioners, Toolen had orchestrated the removal of Father Maurice Ouellette, an

⁵⁰ Letter from Members of St. Jude and St. John the Baptist Parishes, Montgomery, AL to Toolen, March 21, 1965. Toolen papers.

Edmundite activist and advocate for racial reform in Selma.⁵¹ In 1963, for example, Ouellette orchestrated a series of civil rights marches by school children. And he regularly clashed with Selma's white leadership, often "to the prejudice of order and tranquility in this community."⁵² By July 1965, Ouellette had pushed Toolen and Selma's white population to their limit. The prelate ordered the Edmundite out of the diocese, much to the chagrin of Selma's black population.⁵³

Toolen showed no sympathy for St. Elizabeth's men's protest and no remorse for his own actions. Missing the diocesan-wide meeting was their own fault, and "the only ones you hurt by not going . . . was yourselves." What was more, "our negro people were there in great numbers, so you really weren't missed." His response to Craig's letter revealed the strain that was evident between the chancery and religious orders in the diocese who increasingly agitated for civil rights. Although any earlier correspondence cannot be located in the Toolen papers, both Craig and Toolen refer to St. Elizabeth's previous efforts to contact Toolen about racial matters. Toolen ignored those, he said, because they came from a "crowd and I only deal with the people through the priests." But Toolen found the priests in Selma "impossible to deal with . . . for a long time." The fissure between the aging, conservative archbishop and the new generation of activists had widened into a chasm. For his entire tenure as Alabama's

⁵¹ Letter from Robert Craig, St. Elizabeth's Church, Selma to Toolen, November 20, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁵² Letter from Chris B. Heinz, Selma to Toolen, September 23, 1963. Toolen papers.

⁵³ Letter from Toolen to Daniel Morgan, Huntsville, AL, January 26, 1966; Morgan to Toolen, January 16, 1966. Toolen papers. Eagles, *Outside Agitator*, pp. 67-68; and J.L. Chesnut, Jr. and Julia Cass, *Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J.L. Chesnut, Jr.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990).

prelate Toolen had relied on religious orders to advance the faith among the state's colored population. By the late 1960s, that alliance had given way to open conflict over the application of Catholic racial and social justice.

Despite his opposition to the Selma demonstrations, however, Toolen approved the use of the City of St. Jude, the Edmundites' medical and educational ministry center devoted to African Americans, for marchers to camp one night enroute from Selma to Montgomery. In a statement explaining the decision to allow the encampment, Father Paul Mullaney, Director of the City of St. Jude, described the center "as a monument to brotherhood and racial justice." Toolen was in "perfect agreement" that the Catholic property should be used for the marchers. Father Mullaney explained that the City of St. Jude alone had the facilities to accommodate "all of the Sisters and most of the clergy Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish." Instead of being strictly a Catholic-supported organization, Mullaney reasoned, the Catholic compound had national ties that made its mission larger than its ministry to Selma's African-American population. "Many of the demonstrators or their families are benefactors So really the City of St. Jude belongs to the American people." Mullaney concluded that St. Jude's hospitality would encourage "outside demonstrators [to] bring back to their own communities in their hearts what they witnessed in Alabama in order that it will help them solve their own racial problems."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "Father Mullaney States Policy Involved In Use Of St. Jude's Property," *The Catholic Week*, March 26, 1965, p. 1. Indeed, Father Maurice Ouellette of St. Elizabeth's, often provided the local movement what Taylor Branch calls "fragile sanctuary" for their meetings. See Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, pp. 390-391.

Toolen's primary sins in the Selma case were poor judgment and a characteristic lack of diplomacy. Wire services ensured that his St. Patrick's Day speech made news nationwide, and his very public stance made him a lightning rod for reaction from groups on both sides of the issue. Staunch segregationists--Catholic and Protestants, from the South, North, Midwest and West alike--claimed him as their own and rallied around him with their own interpretations of his words. Indeed, in March 1965, Toolen reported that he received "hundreds of letters . . . and most of them are very favorable." He estimated that four out of five--including those that came from outside Alabama--supported his St. Patrick's Day speech. Still others wrote letters to the editor of *The Catholic Week*. A Birmingham correspondent informed the archbishop that "many people not of our faith" had stopped him on the street to express their support for the imperious ordinary.⁵⁵

Many of these people were racists, and opposed to "outsiders" and communists who for whatever reason threatened their way of life. Toolen also was opposed to 'outsiders,' and he was willing enough to agree that communists were active in the civil rights movement, the United Nations, and quite possibly wherever civic disorder arose. Toolen's Selma opinion stemmed directly from his understanding of the nature of the Church and his authority within the Church hierarchy. He demonstrated a pre-conciliar notion of clerical authority and was at best ambivalent about the changes wrought by the Vatican Council. Indeed, one of his primary complaints about the Selma demonstration was that these priests and nuns did not ask his permission to come to Alabama, a

⁵⁵ Letter from Toolen to Mr. W.S. Pritchard, Birmingham, AL March 24, 1965; and Pritchard to Toolen, March 19, 1965. Toolen papers.

common courtesy usually paid the presiding prelate. Toolen believe he had the situation well under control, as far as the Church was concerned, and these religious from outside Alabama were nothing more than interlopers and troublemakers.

Toolen's staunchest supporters--or at least those who bothered to write the Mobile archbishop--were most concerned with three issues: the presence of outsiders in the South, most of whom were probably communists; the Church's image in the eyes of non-Catholics; and the way in which Vatican II undermined the South's social hierarchy. It is difficult to separate these issues into neat categories, as in the average white Catholic's mind they were intermingled and all part of the same problem. Communists supported and staffed civil rights groups, most notably the NAACP, the reasoning went. And when Catholics were associated with such groups, the respect they had worked so hard to earn in Alabama eroded and brought the entire church under a cloud of suspicion.

Because they came from outside the region, religious orders such as the Edmundites and Josephites assumed most of the work among the South's colored population. White laypeople looked on them with a small measure of respect; but, also because of their outsider status, that respect for their devotion and service to the Church at times remained largely masked by periods of suspicion and resentment. Religious orders whose headquarters and superiors were located elsewhere were, in short, outsiders; and according to southern conventional wisdom on racial matters, outsiders could not be trusted. In Selma, for example, Catholic parishioners drew sharp boundaries around acceptable levels of activism among priests and nuns. One white

Catholic there acknowledged that the Edmundites' "work is Christian and that the primary purpose of the Mission is the work of God but aren't they getting a little more involved than necessary?" Integration was sure to come, Toolen's correspondent conceded, but when it did, it would be better with "our own colored ones that live here and who have helped us build our Church, not the ones sent here that are looking for trouble." The local Edmundites, in one person's mind, might be better trained in "the doctrines of our Church," but opening the door for "Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins, Shuddleworth [*sic*], Shores, etc." was out of the question and abused the "seeming dictatorial power of the Church."⁵⁶

Following the voting rights demonstrations in Selma, one typical Birmingham laywoman noted that this was "a day when Images seem so important," yet "Priests and Nuns who seem to be part time God's servants and part time Anarchists playing into the Communists hands, present a sad picture."⁵⁷ A husband and wife from Fort Walton Beach, Florida (in the Mobile-Birmingham diocese) pointed to the alleged role the National Council of churches--a known agent of communism in many white southern minds--played in organizing civil rights demonstrations. After all, they reasoned, J. Edgar Hoover had proved "conclusively the real nature of our enemy (atheistic Communism) in our midst and the insidious character of the means they employ." As far as the civil rights movement was concerned, its leaders were "deeply Communistic affiliated and controlled." Those Communists, moreover, "create the mobs, control the

⁵⁶ Letter from Joseph I. McHugh, Orrville, AL to Toolen, September 29, 1963. Toolen papers.

⁵⁷ Letter from Mrs. Madelyn Patterson Burdick, Birmingham, AL to Toolen, March 19, 1965. Toolen papers.

mobs so the situation is just as calm or as explosive as the Reds want it to be.” In fact, Mr. and Mrs. McCleary blamed Selma, student campus riots, and the killing of John F. Kennedy all on an “International Communism Conspiracy.”⁵⁸

In response to a syndicated column of Msgr. George Higgins, a white Huntsville Catholic also drew explicit connections between civil rights activism and communist influence. William H. Graham was suspicious that Martin Luther King, Jr. would be “concerned about seeing the defeat of Communism.” Graham accused King of appointing known communists to positions in the SCLC, and civil rights organizations “are rapidly showing their Red orientation by support of peace rallies, teach-ins, etc.” Following King’s Nobel Peace Prize Award, Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta organized an Atlanta dinner in the civil rights leader’s honor. For Graham, that was tantamount to “listening to the Bishop of Havana assure us that Fidel Castro was not a Communist.”⁵⁹ A second Huntsville man aimed his anti-communist rhetoric at Richard Morrisroe, the Chicago priest who was shot in the back in Lowndes County, Alabama, after participating in a voter registration drive. According to John Francis, Morrisroe permitted “the Communist conspiracy to use him in their sinister take-over of our Republic.” The civil rights movement, moreover, had not been infiltrated by communists; “it has been created by them.” And diabolical communists had engineered tensions between the races. Exercising acrobatic twists of logic, Francis offered as proof the fact that otherwise good Christians had been forced to hate people of other

⁵⁸ Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Edward McCleary, Fort Walton Beach, FL, to Toolen, March 25, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁵⁹ “Msgr. Higgins’ Column On Dr. King Draws Reaction,” *The Catholic Week*, July 23, 1965, p 6.

racess. "Let each Christian ask himself how many of another race in his personal acquaintance have the communists succeeded in making him hate, or even dislike."⁶⁰

Toolen's Catholic correspondents were also worried about a second potential problem, namely the image of the Church in the eyes of their non-Catholic neighbors. This was a serious issue for a group of people who comprised less than 3 percent of Alabama's population. A woman from Montrose, Alabama, Dorothea Brown Miller, applauded Toolen for his "wisdom, understanding and foresight--and the courage in this time of crisis to speak the truth." His words came at an opportune time for Miller, as she found it difficult to handle Protestants' questions about the Catholic presence at the civil rights rally. "Non-Catholic friends have asked me why--also, and it has been hard to answer without condemning the good--perhaps well meaning, misinformed nuns. But today I am so proud of my bishop!" Now, those same friends were praising her bishop as well.⁶¹ A second woman from Sawyerville, Alabama, who described herself as "inately [*sic*] religious", expressed a similar sentiment, even as she revealed a perhaps more intimate and troubling concern. The nuns who participated in the Selma demonstration flagrantly violated southern gender boundaries with their open association with African-American men. Since there were so few Catholics in the South, nuns, she asserted, "should be above reproach to help us." Instead, much to this letter-writer's consternation, female religious were not "following in the foot steps of

⁶⁰ "Red Conspiracy Among Negroes," *The Catholic Week*, March 18, 1966, p. 6. On Morrisroe and Jonathan Daniels, who was shot and killed at the same time, see Eagles, *Outside Agitator*.

⁶¹ Letter from Mrs. James Ainsworth Miller (Dorothea Brown Miller), Montrose, AL to Toolen, March 18, 1965. Toolen papers.

'God's Masterpiece', -- our lovely Blessed Mother. . . . To see pictures of them walking arm-in-arm with Negro men who, even Now, would not dare ask a Southern white lady to do as much . . . shocked me beyond words." Neither blacks nor whites, in her view, could respect sisters who behaved in such a manner. These nuns were "losing souls, and not trying to get voting rights."⁶²

If outsider communists running loose in the South threatened to undermine the southern racial hierarchy, at least white Catholics believed their church would forestall the demise of the southern way of life. Indeed, southern literary figures such as Allen Tate had converted to Catholicism in the mid-twentieth century because of the Church's commitment to orthodoxy and hierarchy, which Tate believed could best support the southern social order.⁶³ Lay reaction to the civil rights movement and the Vatican Council indicate that the literati were not the only ones with these same concerns, although, to be sure, the lay understanding of these changes was no doubt more visceral than Tate's. The same Birmingham woman who complained of anarchists and communists in the civil rights movement was unexcited about the Council's changes. "The Pope might think all these recent changes resulting from the Ecumenical Council will mean a Great New Day for the Church, but I fear I cannot share His enthusiasm. Frankly, the whole world seems to be in a pitiful state to me."⁶⁴ One white Georgia Catholic noted the South's "confused Catholics" and "the pressure of confusion within

⁶² Letter from Joan B. Thyson, Sawyerville, AL to Mother Superior, Mary Knoll Sister, Ossining, NY, March 17, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁶³ See Huff, *Allen Tate and the Catholic Revival*; and Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Letter from Burdick to Toolen, March 19, 1965.

our own Church."⁶⁵ A Montgomery woman shared this sentiment and praised Toolen for asserting his authority. "Catholics have been taught that constituted authority is from God, and when we see products of that teaching--especially our religious--join in their ridiculous political and publicity-seeking parade, see them defy and break our laws and set themselves up as lawmakers, thereby encouraging anarchy, we need to know where our spiritual leader stands."⁶⁶

A second Georgian expressed bewilderment over Vatican changes, as he implicitly criticized his own archbishop for his support of conciliar renewal. Joseph J. Jones, a newspaper reporter from Thomasville, Georgia, thanked Toolen for his "enriched soul, your religious posture and excellent leadership" and praised him for his "Christ-like attitude toward the Negroes" and his welcome attention to "the trouble-making cunning of Dr. Martin Luther King." Jones lamented that it was "most difficult to find peace of soul in the 'up-dated' Church," and requested Toolen's "counsel, advice and guidance" in understanding the liturgical changes wrought by Vatican II.⁶⁷ What makes Jones's request for spiritual discipling from Toolen so startling is why Georgians would bypass their own prelate, Paul J. Hallinan, in favor of Alabama's bishop. The reason is no mystery.

The answer lies in Hallinan's prominent role in conciliar and racial reform in the 1960s. The Atlanta archbishop was a member of the Council's liturgical committee,

⁶⁵ Letter from Joseph P. Myers, Atlanta, GA to Toolen, March 19, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁶⁶ Letter from Caroline Krackenberger, Montgomery, AL to Toolen, March 22, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁶⁷ Letter from Joseph J. Jones, Thomasville, GA to Toolen, March 25, 1965. Toolen papers.

and therefore was at the forefront of those changes. He also was a racial liberal, whose public support of, and friendship with, Martin Luther King, Jr. scandalized most of his white church members. Toolen represented a stark contrast, a voice for at least moderation, if not tradition and outright reaction. In the minds of these whites southerners, the belief system that Toolen symbolized, with its emphasis on certain orthodoxy and divinely established authority, should sustain the white power structure. By the late 1960s, it could not. By 1967 at least one local Catholic, Gordon Abele, complained about "the Vatican engulfed by the Leftist Tide" pressuring the aging Toolen to retire. Abele had a better idea. "It's 'boys instead of bombs' Paul [Pope Paul VI] who should step down." The Church universal had become virtually unrecognizable to many white Alabama lay people. Indeed, many white southern Catholics resisted Vatican II because it reinforced liberal religious and social changes. These whites became disillusioned with their church because it failed them where they most needed it, namely, in defense of the white southern status quo. They equated this failure with conciliar renewal.

If nothing else, the civil rights movement revealed that fault lines within the southern Church cut across racial and ideological lines. Priests such as Father Albert Foley and nuns often supported black equality and activism. In the summer of 1965, for example, the Mobile chancery granted permission for a Trinitarian sister in Gadsden, Alabama, to continue serving on a Biracial Council "working along quiet lines to help the negro citizen attain his goals by peaceful methods." The ad hoc, ecumenical group sought to gain accreditation for local black schools and to encourage local officials to

"ease up" on implementation of literacy tests for voting. Sister Stephen Francis agreed--with her superior's permission--to write the state senator for his assistance.⁶⁸ In Mobile, furthermore, a local branch of the National Catholic Interracial Federation operated with some twenty members.⁶⁹

There were also those white lay Catholics who refused to heed Toolen's voice of conservatism and who condemned him for his opposition to civil rights activism in the wake of the Selma demonstrations. These lay persons were very familiar with Catholic doctrine and actively involved in at least some aspect of Church work. One woman from Birmingham compared Toolen to that other Alabamian well known for his reactionary tubthumping. She argued that Toolen's relationship to the doctrines of Rome were similar to the affinity Governor George Wallace had with the U.S. government.⁷⁰ A Cherokee, Alabama, woman concluded that she was forced to abandon any hope of Toolen and the Alabama Church accomplishing anything in the cause of civil rights, especially "since the Alabama Legislature ruled by racist George Wallace has publicly commended you [Toolen] for apparently aligning yourself with his offensive against human rights."⁷¹

James R. Jackson, of Mobile, converted to Catholicism from the Baptist Church "because we had lost faith with the Baptist people here in the South." Before Toolen

⁶⁸ Letter from Mother Mary of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, PA, to Rt. Rev. Msgr. Philip Cullen, Mobile, July 22, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁶⁹ "Interracial Group Active In Mobile," *The Catholic Week*, April 23, 1965, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Letter from Mrs. R.D. Hawkins, Birmingham, AL to Toolen, March 26, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁷¹ Letter from Mrs. Albert E. Taylor, Cherokee, AL to Toolen, March 23, 1965. Toolen papers.

voiced his opposition to the Selma demonstrations, Jackson and his family “were a hundred per-cent satisfied with the Catholic faith and with its beliefs.” But Jesus Christ himself, Jackson asserted, would have been in Alabama “helping oppressed people,” so Toolen’s position was completely at odds with the true Catholic position.⁷² Another Mobilian, Walter L. Darring, who identified himself as president of a group called Catholic Laymen for Church Reform, agreed that Toolen’s position on race deviated from Catholic doctrine. Darring suggested that instead of dividing the people as Toolen charged, King only pointed out the wrongfulness of the separation that already existed. “The only sense in which that may be said to hurt the cause of the Negro is in that it arouses the indignation of those who would suppress him.”⁷³

These white Catholics found themselves in the minority, but their opposition to Toolen and support for the civil rights movement symbolized the tension over moral authority within the Alabama Catholic Church. In the former Confederacy, a conservative Protestant hegemony had sanctified strict racial boundaries that kept blacks subordinate to white authority well into the 1960s. Religious differences aside, most white Catholics were comfortable with this racial hegemony. Prior to the Vatican Council, church leaders did little to challenge segregation. Indeed, only a few select individuals and religious orders actively sought racial and social justice for African Americans. But the civil rights movement--reinforced by Vatican II--relaxed racial boundaries and contributed to an unstable southern social order.

⁷² Letter from James R. Jackson, Mobile, AL to Toolen, March 23, 1965. Toolen papers.

⁷³ Letter from Walter Darring, Mobile, AL to Toolen, March 21, 1965. Toolen papers.

Other Catholics saw those relaxed boundaries as signs of hope. The Church finally had the opportunity to reclaim the moral and spiritual authority it had lost while it supported segregation. Ironically, Vatican II also gave Catholics the liberty to challenge clerical authority more openly. As a result, the 1960s proved to be a period of liturgical as well as racial conflict. Indeed, for many Alabama whites the two were indistinguishable. They eventually accepted both, but from this milieu emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s the “realignment” of conservative and liberal church people that laid the foundation for today’s public intersection of religion and politics.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*.

CHAPTER 6
"BUT I DO ADVOCATE PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH":
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA AND LIBERAL RACE RELATIONS

In the 1960s, Alabama and Georgia represented two sides of the same South. Alabama gave the nation the fire hoses and police dogs of Birmingham and Bull Connor, the violence of Selma and Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark and Colonel Al Lingo, and the stand-in-the-schoolhouse-door defiance of George Wallace--all stark representations of white opposition to integration at all costs. Georgia wore a more moderate facade. In Albany in 1962, for example, police and city officials carefully avoided violence and overcrowded jails by arresting demonstrators on charges unrelated to segregation and then quietly shipping arrestees out to neighboring counties. Atlanta, for its part, represented the modern South, the city for whom the vision of racial progress meant commercial and public relations success--the city that, in Mayor William Hartsfield's words, was "too busy to hate." To be sure, a peaceful facade belied a city and state sharply divided over race. But no one in power (white or black) wanted Atlanta to appear divided--for these civic leaders, appearances and the city's image were much more important than actually solving racial problems.¹

¹ See Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta* (New York: Scribner, 1996). On the Albany Movement, see Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, pp. 42-52.

Similarly, the Catholic Church in Georgia differed fundamentally from Toolen's diocese in Alabama. Bishop Francis Hyland and then Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan fit well with Atlanta's white boosters. Hallinan especially embodied the image that many of them sought to portray (ecumenical, positive, active, youthful, and espousing progressive ideals within the context of his church). Circumstances in Georgia were different from Alabama's situation. The Archdiocese of Atlanta was smaller--even more of a missionary diocese the Mobile-Birmingham--and the bishops had fewer long-standing ties to their see. The Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham was intimately associated with Bishop Toolen, the prelate through the Church's twentieth-century growth in Alabama. His own prejudices notwithstanding, Toolen recognized the delicate racial situation during the 1950s and 1960s. This awareness helped dictate his and the white Church's response to civil rights activism. By contrast, in the case of Atlanta, regional prosperity demanded more progressive race relations. In addition to a racially liberal archbishop, the Atlanta church was led by prominent moderate laymen, attorneys and members of Atlanta's post-World War II business and commercial elite. Toolen would have agreed that the South needed some progress in race relations and that the true spirit of Catholicism probably precluded racism. But he disagreed on tactics, opposed demonstrations and favored a more gradualist approach. An untold number of white Georgia Catholics no doubt also would have preferred a more conservative approach. By the mid-1960s, however, the Church in Atlanta endorsed the racial liberalism of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the mainstream civil rights movement.

This liberalism was the product of their theology and their understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

In December 1960, seven Atlanta-area Catholics wrote Bishop Hyland in support of recent civil rights demonstrations in that city. They sought reassurance that their bishop stood for racial justice. The seven men and women noted that "many" Atlanta Catholics "are in sympathy with, some actively support and participate in, the peaceful demonstrations which have transpired here in recent weeks." Those activists had followed "strong inner convictions," because they had not "been able to clearly define the stated position of their own faith." The influence of their inner beliefs notwithstanding, "Catholics living in areas of racial distinctions need to have the spiritual and moral support of a positive declaration of the teachings of Christ."² The American bishops had issued a statement on racism and discrimination in 1958, but these Catholics demanded a declaration of diocesan policy from their own bishop as well.

Their concerns resulted from the image their local church presented to fellow Christians. The seven Atlanta Catholics first pointed to the progress the Church had made in Georgia and the "precious heritage of faith not readily understood by non-Catholics." As a religious minority in a Protestant region, they were "constantly under observation." And the image of the Church suffered for a lack of strong convictions on the part of Catholic leaders. Indeed, "any deviation . . . from the practice of the

² From L.G. Allain, Horace Bohannon, Charles Goosby, Thomas W. Hines, John Thomas, (Mrs.) Evarie S. Thompson, (Mrs.) Johnnie Yancey to Hyland, December 11, 1960. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

Christian doctrine that all men are brothers in the eyes of God creates doubt and suspicion in the minds of Christians of other faiths.” One casualty of this negligence would be Catholic “missionary potential.”³ There is no evidence that Hyland responded to the letter. Later that month, however, he signed a holiday pronouncement issued by some thirty white and black city leaders. Read from pulpits throughout the city, the joint statement urged Atlanta’s churchgoers to seek peaceful solutions to racial tension and to continue “give and take” conversations between whites and blacks.⁴ The ecumenical statement was probably not what Bishop Hyland’s correspondents had in mind. Nevertheless, the pastoral letter from Hyland and Bishops McDonough of Savannah and Hallinan of Charleston announcing that Catholic schools would soon be integrated followed just two months later.⁵

The 1961 statement by the southern bishops announcing the impending desegregation of parochial schools came after much handwringing, soul searching, and practical weighing of the consequences for the Church in Georgia and South Carolina. Bishop Hyland had at least considered integrating Catholic high schools in the Atlanta area some four years earlier. At the October 1957 meeting of the Archdiocesan Board of Consultors, a group of priests with whom the bishop regularly conferred, Hyland asked the board’s opinion about integrating the city’s new high school. There were eighty-seven black students of high school age. Two years had elapsed since the

³ From Allain, Bohannon, et al. to Hyland, December 11, 1960.

⁴ News clipping [probably *The Bulletin*], January 7, 1961, in Bishop Hyland Scrapbook, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁵ See Chapter 4.

Supreme Court had declared that integration of public schools should occur “with all deliberate speed.” Perhaps Hyland believed that 1957 was a promising time for the integration of parochial schools. Atlanta certainly would have been one of the earliest dioceses in the South to integrate its schools.

In 1955 Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans announced that integration of his Catholic schools would begin “not before September 1956” and promised that pastoral letters would soon be forthcoming with instructions about the impending desegregation. Many people assumed that schools would begin to admit blacks in 1956. But under intense pressure from the white laity, Rummel stalled and New Orleans parochial schools remained segregated until 1962.⁶ In Atlanta, Bishop Hyland’s good intentions never made their way out of the consultors’ meeting. The bishop assured the assembled priests “that any decision in this matter would be his own and would not entail the consultors.” Nevertheless, the majority of his advisers agreed that integration “at this time because of the political climate would be imprudent and leave us open to punitive measures by the State, such as taxes and loss of teaching licenses.”⁷ This fear was not unreasonable for the South in the late-1950s. Politicians and white parents in Georgia were willing to close public schools or use state funds to finance transfers to segregated private schools rather than force integration. Indeed,

⁶ Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, p. 172.

⁷ Proceedings of the Consultors Meeting, October 23, 1957. Box 008/1, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

Georgia legislators made school desegregation illegal until public pressure forced the repeal of those laws in January 1961.⁸

In a 1961 letter to Msgr. John E. Kelly of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Hyland pointed to New Orleans's school integration problems and allowed that "No one who does not actually live in the South--as I have done for more than eleven years--can appreciate how very involved, intricate and delicate the race question is." Hyland acknowledged that McDonough, Hallinan, and he intended their announcement to gauge Catholic reaction to possible school integration. He claimed to be under "no illusions," but in an earlier letter to Hallinan the Atlanta bishop revealed his optimism. "Personally, I do not think the reaction will be an unfavorable one on the part of some as we may fear." Instead, Hyland was convinced that "a substantial number of the people in the South want this issue settled justly as well as peacefully."⁹ Despite the pastoral letter, Catholic school integration in Georgia was not immediately forthcoming. Hyland conceded as much in March 1961, less than a month after issuing the school announcement.¹⁰ Indeed, it was not until after Hallinan became Atlanta's first archbishop in 1962 that the archdiocesan schools were integrated.

Compared to the reaction of Alabama Catholics when their bishop issued a similar pastoral letter a few years later, the Georgia response was mild. Atlanta resident

⁸ Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, p. 224.

⁹ Hyland to Very Rev. Msgr. John E. Kelly, Bureau of Information, NCWC, Washington, D.C., February 22, 1961; Hyland to Bishop Paul Hallinan, Charleston, S.C., January 25, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁰ Hyland to Hughes Spalding, Atlanta, March 2, 1961. Box, 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

Hughes Spalding, a self-described “Cracker, born and bred,” expressed ambivalence over the decision to integrate parochial schools. The seventy-four-year-old attorney and prominent layman acknowledged that integration “is sound and Christian.” That did not mean, however, that Spalding welcomed the announcement, “nor does it mean that I will like it; but let’s say that it is the proper thing to do and that it is inevitable.” Spalding’s primary concern was the general public’s inherent anti-Catholicism, which he feared parochial school integration would only arouse. He urged the bishop to wait until the public schools admitted blacks--“until the furor and the violence . . . settle down and blow over”--before integrating parochial schools.¹¹

Others were less circumspect and more appreciative of their bishop’s stance. Ferdinand Buckley, another Atlanta attorney and later president of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men, congratulated Hyland “for doing the will of God.” He promised that this new “courageous policy” would be supported “by the prayers of your people.”¹² A third attorney promised that he and his family were “behind you one hundred percent and will be glad to do anything we can do to help implement your letter.”¹³ And the Executive Board of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

¹¹ Hughes Spalding, Atlanta to Hyland, February 22, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹² From Ferdinand Buckley, Atlanta to Hyland, February 20, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹³ From Henry L. de Give, Atlanta to Hyland, February 20, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

"unanimously and enthusiastically approved" the pastoral letter and "wholeheartedly" offered their support in implementing school integration.¹⁴

But other whites feared potential school desegregation. One Atlantan signed his letter to the bishop, "A soon-to-be Ex-Catholic & his family." This anonymous correspondent did not want his "13 yr old daughter . . . to associate with the savages known as Negroes."¹⁵ Mary Bennett, moreover, was the lone Catholic "in a large office of non-Catholics." Following Hyland's 1961 pastoral letter, she wished that she had been on vacation in order to be "spared the humiliation I feel this morning." Her coworkers, she reported, were "bitter toward" both Catholics and the Negro, but "I have never felt the need to lower my head until this morning." She complained that Hyland had placed the needs of African Americans above "the views of those [whites] who were instrumental in the building and maintenance of the" diocese's churches, schools, and other institutions. Bennett could appreciate African Americans' efforts to achieve equal rights in public facilities like integrated bus seating and job equality. But in her mind the bishops offered blacks "the churches and schools which have been built and maintained by the present parishioners, without contributions from the colored race." Negroes had their own churches and schools, and they should be content with those, just

¹⁴ From Irene B. Maslanka, Corresponding Secretary, Atlanta DCCW to Hyland, February 27, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49. See also, From Gladys Gunning, Atlanta to Hyland, February 23, 1961; and From David Murphy, Atlanta, February 19, 1961, in the same folder. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁵ Anonymous letter, to Hyland, n.d., Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA. There are other anonymous letters to Hyland in the same folder.

as whites “of character” were content with the ones they had built.¹⁶ Separate facilities had been acceptable until only recently, and Bennett failed to understand what had changed to make such an arrangement no longer permissible.

For another Atlanta woman, furthermore, the possibility that her seven children might attend school with African Americans undermined her faith in Catholic institutions. Her husband was a Presbyterian, but he had “lived up to the tenets of MY church better than many Catholics do.” Betty Long and her husband were appalled, therefore, at the prospect of their children being exposed to integrated schools. When they were married, her husband assured the priest that he would help raise any offspring in the Catholic faith, but “Nothing was mentioned about integration. He now for the first time in our 18 years of marriage hears about the ‘urgency’ of a question never even brought up before.” This particular woman entertained no doubts whatsoever about who was at fault: “On the whole our negroes were a poor but a very happy race until outside agitators told them they weren’t.” Long assured Bishop Hyland that she did not hate blacks, “but we do hate the many alien forces which are stirring up hatred between our two races.”¹⁷

As bad as integration was, it was not the most serious problem facing white southern Catholics, according to Long. She feared that the Church would be unable or unwilling to rein in unbridled social and religious change. Those Catholics who

¹⁶ From (Miss) Mary Bennett to Hyland, February 20, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁷ Betty Tecklenburg Long (Mrs. Leonard L. Long) to Hyland, March 15, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

approached integration with a certain nonchalance, in Long's mind, were the same ones who "see no harm in a Catholic girl going with a divorced man since she doesn't plan to marry him." Similarly, Long feared that the Catholic Church would not be satisfied with mere token integration. White school children would be forced into intimate situations with masses of "colored classmates." Integration in other Catholic organizations and activities left Betty Long questioning authority figures whom she had trusted all her life. Long informed Hyland that she could no longer tell her children, "Do whatever Father tells you," since "I never know what Father may find 'urgent' to tell them." Both state and national Catholic organizations were integrated; indeed, Long's sixteen-year-old son found himself seated next to a black girl at a recent state Catholic Youth Organization dinner. Such racial coeducational mixing went to the gender-based roots of many whites' fears of integration. Long and those white Catholics like her, therefore, struggled with the Church's authority in the 1960s. "We do not want them to go to protestant youth groups and yet we dare not let them go to state CYO affairs."¹⁸ There is no indication how Long eventually resolved her dilemma, but she was not alone in her belief that the Church's about-face on segregation threatened to undermine its moral and spiritual authority on all fronts.

Interestingly, this correspondence occurred before Vatican II had convened. Betty Long associated changes in the Church and crumbling ecclesiastical authority with much larger forces--forces outside the Church and not conciliar ones necessarily. Long and Mary Bennett both--and those white Catholics in Alabama as well--could not

¹⁸ *ibid.*

understand why things had changed. What had been good for the Church for generations should continue to be acceptable. This 1961 exchange over promised integration reveals an almost inherent racial conservatism that opposed change. Southern white Catholics were thus predisposed to suspect conciliar reforms that the Vatican Council would promulgate in just a few years.

The joint 1961 pastoral acknowledged at least one of the problems inherent in the southern Catholic Church moving too quickly (relative to the rest of the South) in school integration. The South's racial problems, the bishops cautioned, "must be solved in the wider context of our missionary work." That is, integration must be implemented in such a way as to insure that parochial schools and the Church's position in southern society did not suffer.¹⁹ For his part, Bishop Hyland expressed a deep ambivalence with respect to his episcopal authority over the Church in north Georgia. On the one hand, he wrote to New Orleans Jesuit Louis J. Twomey that his position brought with it the authority to implement Church doctrine and serve unquestioned as "a rule[r] of the Church." On the other hand, though, the bishop should "be a Father in Christ to all the people committed to his charge." Hyland was torn between responsibility to his moral authority and his desire not to alienate many of his white parishioners, who comprised 94 percent of the diocese's Catholic population. Hyland defended his and the diocese's record in race relations. He reminded Twomey that "It is much easier for you, my dear Father, to speak freely in the South on the subject of race relations than it is for me who

¹⁹ Pastoral letter, February 19, 1961, reprinted in *Syllabus on Racial Justice*; and From Hyland to Hallinan, Charleston, SC, January 25, 1961, Box 036/6, Folder 49; "Southern Bishops Carry 'Torch Of Integration,'" Newspaper clipping from *The Register* (n.p.), February 26, 1961. Bishop Hyland Scrapbook, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

carries on his soul the onerous responsibilities of the episcopal office." A "specialist" like Twomey might disagree, but Hyland concluded that his diocese had "achieved a measure of integration among our Catholic people of which I am rather proud."²⁰

A couple of weeks later, Hyland addressed a pastoral letter to the two predominantly black parishes in Atlanta, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Paul of the Cross. The bishop instructed their pastors to read the letter from the pulpit without comment. Hyland repeated his ambivalence over his episcopal authority, admitting "I am gravely torn in spirit between these two aspects of the office of Bishop." The Atlanta ordinary promised his African-American parishioners that even though he could not "carry on my weak shoulders the causes of the thousands upon thousands of Negro people who" live in north Georgia, he would bear the burdens of "our Negro Catholic people, because they are mine." But the dual nature of his office precluded him from doing anything "to harm spiritually any of our white Catholic people, however wrong some of them may be objectively in respect to proper race relations." Hyland understood it to be his "duty to establish proper race relations among all our Catholic people and I intend to fulfill this duty."²¹

But he requested that Atlanta's black Catholics be patient during the necessary "period of preparation." The challenges of bringing less than two thousand black Catholics into full participation with the diocese's more than thirty thousand whites

²⁰ From Hyland to Rev. L.J. Twomey, S.J., Institute of Industrial Relations, New Orleans, April 3, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

²¹ Pastoral letter from Hyland, April 10, 1961; From Hyland to Rev. Michael McKeever, S.M.A., Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Atlanta, April 13, 1961; and From Hyland to Rev. Dennis Walsh, C.R., St. Paul

appeared relatively simple, Hyland conceded. But the sizes of the two populations were irrelevant. The problem required "a change of heart and mind on the part of some. It is a moral and a spiritual problem." But Hyland had additional dilemmas in mind as well. Indeed, he added a third aspect to his dual role as bishop--that of Atlanta booster. Moving too quickly--and too far ahead of the rest of the region--in racial integration threatened to bring unfavorable publicity on the city and, therefore, on the Church. Hyland recalled the "sad events" prompted in other cities by attempts to desegregate schools. He assumed that the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Paul of the Cross would not want similar disturbances to occur in Atlanta, "and thereby bring nationwide and no doubt world-wide disrepute upon our city." Nor would Catholics want "these unhappy things to happen" to their own properties, which "would injure the good name of our diocese."²² Hyland contemplated reading the same letter in the rest of Atlanta's parishes a few weeks later, but there is no indication that he did so.²³

Along with his counterparts in Savannah and Charleston, Hyland had promised to integrate Atlanta's parochial schools "as soon as this can be done with safety to the children and the schools." At the very least, this should occur no later than the desegregation of the public schools, the prelates promised.²⁴ In 1955 the Supreme Court ordered school desegregation to take place "with all deliberate speed," a vague order

of the Cross Church, Atlanta, April 14, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

²² Pastoral letter from Hyland, April 10, 1961.

²³ From Hyland to Bishop Paul J. Hallinan, Charleston, April 10, 1961. Box 036/6, Folder 49, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

²⁴ Pastoral letter, February 19, 1961, reprinted in *Syllabus on Racial Justice*.

with an indeterminate timetable that allowed southern school systems to put off mixing white and black students. After five years of court battles, in 1960 Atlanta's public school system finally developed an acceptable integration plan, albeit one that would bring token desegregation at first and only gradual admission of blacks into white schools. Black students would be admitted to white schools one grade per year, beginning with the twelfth grade. Following a one-year delay, nine black students were finally allowed to transfer to four white high schools.²⁵ But Hyland did not move right away to admit African-American students to white parochial schools. That task would be left to Hyland's successor, Paul Hallinan, the former bishop of Charleston and Hyland's co-signatory in the 1961 joint pastoral statement.

An Ohio native and a priest since 1937, Hallinan was a veteran of World War II and a leader in the Newman Apostolate, the Catholic Church's ministry to college campuses. He was consecrated bishop of Charleston in 1958, where he regularly clashed with South Carolina Governor Ernest F. Hollings over the state leader's opposition to integration. In South Carolina, the 1961 pastoral had met with the predictable resistance, and Hallinan took no subsequent steps to integrate the state's parochial schools.²⁶ When he arrived as the new Archdiocese of Atlanta's first archbishop in March 1962, Hallinan told the congregation at his installation that the Church must implement its own "clear-cut teaching on racial justice." But he refused to give any firm dates when parochial schools would be integrated. Indeed, that would not

²⁵ Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, pp. 221-226.

²⁶ Thomas J. Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan: First Archbishop of Atlanta* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1989), pp. 116-131.

be his first priority, he told a local reporter. Echoing the sentiments of his predecessor Hyland, Archbishop Hallinan advised that his first priority was “the good of the Church.” Racial problems would be “worked out in that context”²⁷

In May Hallinan announced to the priests on the archdiocesan Board of Consultors that he planned to integrate parochial schools that September. Hallinan had already consulted three prominent Catholic laymen—two attorneys and a superior court judge—former mayor William Hartsfield, and a few of the priests and religious who would be directly involved in implementing school desegregation. Hallinan laid out the plan for his consultors. He would issue a pastoral letter to be read in all parishes in June, and a press release would be issued simultaneously. The archbishop would enlist “key people” in each parish, and the archdiocese would supply each priest with any necessary “background information.” Schools would be open to all in September, with efforts to control enrollments “so that no one school is swamped with Negro children.” Finally, the archbishop would prepare a *Syllabus on Racial Justice* to be used for instruction in grades seven through twelve.²⁸

None of the consultors opposed the plan, but some urged caution. One priest even counseled that “some consideration should be given to the Segregationists.” He suggested that a sentence be included in the statement “to ease their consciences.” Archbishop Hallinan and a Monsignor O'Connor argued that would only weaken the

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 146-148; sermon quoted in M. Elise Schwalm, R.S.M., ed., “In His Own Words: Paul J. Hallinan, Archbishop of Atlanta, 1962-1968”, p. 13. Manuscript in possession of M. Elise Schwalm. I am grateful to Sister Elise for making the fruits of her hard work available to me.

²⁸ Minutes of Archdiocesan Board of Consultors' Meeting, May 24, 1962. Box 008/1, Folder 2, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta; Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan*, pp. 159-160.

announcement. Besides, Hallinan noted, the nation's bishops had already declared racism a moral evil. The archdiocese's plan must do nothing to counter that 1958 pastoral. Other consultants expressed concern about their own parishes and about schools outside Atlanta. A Monsignor King wanted parish boundaries to be clarified and students confined to their territorial parish. The minutes of the meeting offer no further explanation, but King's concern probably was rooted in a fear that white students would flee those parish schools that did allow any of the archdiocese's approximately seven hundred black students to enroll. Most agreed that now was the appropriate time.²⁹

On June 10, 1962, priests of the Archdiocese of Atlanta read from their pulpits Hallinan's pastoral letter announcing the desegregation of parochial schools in September. Hallinan noted that Atlanta's Catholic churches "have always been open to everyone regardless of race or color." Whites and blacks had attended mass and received sacraments together "for generations." And "excellent schools, as well as pioneer Negro missions, have been established to reach and teach the Negro, not to segregate him." But the Church "has moved forward." Open admission to parochial schools in 1962 was "the logical step," one that "protects the freedom of choice which is the right of Negro parents and children as Catholics and Americans."³⁰ At a press conference that morning, Hallinan admitted to a reporter that he was worried that the state legislature might retaliate by taking away Catholic schools' tax-exempt status and

²⁹ Minutes of Archdiocesan Board of Consultants' Meeting, May 24, 1962.

³⁰ Pastoral Letter from Hallinan, June 10, 1962. Box 036/6, Folder 50, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

teachers' licenses. But such state action was "less likely now than . . . a year ago."³¹ Indeed, the archbishop had prepared his new archdiocese well. Reaction was relatively mild, and state officials did not intervene.

While Bishop of Charleston, Hallinan had appointed a committee to draw up a syllabus on racial justice to be used in the Catholic schools there. He adopted a similar document for teachers to use in grades seven through twelve in Atlanta-area parochial schools. According to Hallinan, Catholics were only indirectly responsible for the legal, political, and economic impact of race discrimination and integration. "But we are directly responsible for the moral course our Catholic people follow." As a result, the archbishop intended the *Syllabus on Racial Justice* "to give our young Catholics fresh insight into the Church's teachings on one of our most urgent social problems." Hallinan's instruction to teachers also reflected the changing nature of authority southern Catholics faced in the 1960s. He instructed teachers to emphasize that the principles taught in the syllabus reflected "a development, not a reversal, of traditional Catholic doctrine." But the relatively recent condemnation of racism and segregation as moral evils left many white Catholics uncomfortable with the Church hierarchy's moral leadership. Hallinan recognized this. "Where parents disagree with the practical application of a Catholic truth," the archbishop warned, "it will be necessary to use great care not to lessen the child's honor and obedience." But students were to learn that the

³¹ Quoted in Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan*, pp. 160 – 161.

"obligation to teach" rested with the bishops of the church and "decisions issuing from the Bishops can never be ignored."³²

Three aspects of Catholic doctrine framed the lessons of the syllabus: the universality of the Church, the virtue of justice, and the Mystical Body of Christ. The universality of the Church meant that the Catholic Church's duty was to teach divine truths. The syllabus reminded students that "what the Church teaches is not of human, but of divine origin. The Church teaching, is Christ teaching." And the divine truth was that the Church recognizes the equality of all men. Racial segregation was wrong because the Supreme Court had ruled it unconstitutional and the bishops of the United States had declared it immoral. The syllabus taught, therefore, that "present day segregation is opposed to the full implications of the Universality of the Church."³³

The sum of the other two doctrines, justice and the Mystical Body of Christ, governed Catholics' relations to others. The Pauline notion of the organic body of Christ, more than any other doctrine, should dictate Catholic attitudes on racial justice, the syllabus warned. Baptism and reception of the sacraments bound all Catholics--white and black--together in communion with the universal Church, "a union far more intimate and real than even the physical union of living members within a physical body." Each member of the Mystical Body of Christ was responsible for all others.

³² Hallinan's pastoral letter to teachers, *A Syllabus on Racial Justice*, p. i; *Syllabus on Racial Justice*, p. 2, emphasis in original. Box 036/6, Folder 51, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA. On the *Syllabus* in Charleston, see Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan*, pp. 129 - 130.

³³ *A Syllabus on Racial Justice*, pp. 3, 30.

"What we do to any member," the syllabus cautioned, "we do to Christ. The application of this to the question of the unity of the races (white and Negro) is obvious."³⁴

But in case the answer was not as obvious as Hallinan assumed, the syllabus later spelled out the practical implications of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. The supernatural union of all members encompassed "every nationality and race" and precluded exclusion or segregation based on race or color. The syllabus then listed specific areas of discrimination wherein "this truth" should apply--employment, housing, education, voting, public services, and a "refusal of honor and respect." The same principles of non-discrimination applied to non-Catholics, "who are admittedly outside the membership of the Mystical Body." Many of those non-Catholics shared "the life of grace" and all were potential members of the Church. By applying the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ to society at large, Hallinan and Atlanta Catholic educators reinforced the ecumenical foundation upon which many Georgia Catholics--the archbishop included--relied in their civil rights activism.³⁵ For those white Catholics who might appeal to the hoary doctrine of states' rights to resist forced integration, the syllabus had an explicit warning. That issue held no weight and "cannot be invoked here to defend Racial Segregation since the State has no power to uphold a law or custom that is unconstitutional and unjust."³⁶

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 5, 33.

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 33-38.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23.

Archbishop Hallinan certainly dominated official diocesan policy and expected his parishioners to adhere to Catholic social doctrine. But official pronouncements were formal steps that offered only limited success. The “matter of racial understanding,” he acknowledged, “is our burden for many a year to come.” The archbishop relied on several prominent laymen in the archdiocese to promote racial justice. The St. Martin Council on Human Relations was a Catholic interracial group devoted to encouraging and demonstrating racial justice. In 1964 the membership roll numbered 104, but only between thirty and fifty of those were active members. Members of the council--along with various priests and nuns--participated in local civil rights demonstrations.³⁷ But primarily the council continued to be one of the arbiters for the archdiocese’s interracial activities. Indeed, a council sub-committee warned members that “our activity must be Catholic activity, since we are not designed for military demonstrations, nor are we a political body.” Their goal was to reach the Catholic community.³⁸ After Hallinan’s announcement of school desegregation, for example, the St. Martin Council sponsored panel presentations to promote racial understanding in individual parishes.³⁹

In 1963 Hallinan instructed his priests to invite the St. Martin Council--a “group of competent Catholics, both white and Negro”--to their parishes. Hallinan pointed out that “there is not a better path to Christian justice and charity than good understanding.”

³⁷ “Atlanta Negroes Demand Civil Rights Speed-Up,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, December 19, 1963.

³⁸ “Recommendations of the Sub-Committee On Proposed Activities for the Ensuing Year,” 1964 Annual Report of St. Martin’s Council on Human Relations. Box 023/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

³⁹ From Hallinan to “Dear Father”, September 19, 1963, emphasis in original. Box 023/2, Folder 1. See also Minutes of Archdiocesan Board of Consultors Meeting. June 27, 1963. Box 008/1, Folder 2, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

The St. Martin Council was “one of our finest instruments to use toward that understanding.”⁴⁰ Between August 1963 and June 1964, the council’s information panel visited every parish and high school in the archdiocese. Panel topics included “A History of Race Relations,” “The Origin of Racial Tensions,” “Science and Race,” “Morality and the Racial Question,” “The Church and Race,” and “What Can We Do To Ease Racial Tensions.” The panel reported that attendance at local presentations “was good in most parishes, especially in those outside of Atlanta.” But the larger parishes in the city mustered only disappointing turnouts.⁴¹

Even where the panel presentations were successful, however, “interest in bi-racial activities dwindles” soon after the council’s demonstration. And, the council reported in 1964, “lacking some kind of follow-up, [interest in biracial activities] dies.” The council recommended the creation of individual parish chapters. But, one sub-committee conceded, that would require the council “to convince [parish leaders] that a problem does exist in each and every Parish.” Even among council members themselves, integration was sometimes more an ideal than reality. In 1964 the council recognized that its white and black members still did not understand the other race’s background and experiences. White members needed to know and appreciate the discrimination suffered by African Americans, “its effects on the daily lives and on their families and the reactions to current problems and events.” They also “need to discover their own hidden prejudices and overcome deeply ingrained stereotyped images of the

⁴⁰ From Hallinan to “Dear Father”, September 19, 1963.

⁴¹ Report, St. Martin’s Human Relation’s Council, 1963-1964 and 1964-1965, June 6, 1965. Box 023/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

negro [sic]." African-American members, for their part, must learn to distinguish "between bigotry and the normal 'red tape' barriers imposed on all citizens, regardless of race." Negro Catholics, furthermore, "need to recognize the danger of fighting intolerance with intolerance of 'everything white.'"⁴²

Internal racial divisions could scarcely be avoided. Yet St. Martin's Council on Human Relations served effectively as an interracial example to the city of Atlanta. In 1964 Gerard Sherry, the white lay editor of the *Georgia Bulletin*, was president of the council and participated in the monthly meetings of the Atlanta Negro Summit Leadership Conference. "Our advice has been sought and given to the Leadership group on many pressing problems including housing and education," Sherry noted. He credited St. Martin's with thwarting "the more militant members of the Summit Leadership from taking precipitous action which would cause fruitless demonstrations and increased tensions." In addition, the council cooperated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Southern Regional Council, and the Georgia Human Relations Council. Indeed, Sherry served as director of the latter group in 1963. In 1965 Sherry reported, parishioners of Holy Cross and Immaculate Heart of Mary parishes served on the DeKalb County Human Relations Council.⁴³

In 1966 St. Martin's Council introduced a Home Dialogue Program intended "to bring together many other people of good will who are unaccustomed to interracial

⁴² "Recommendations of the Sub-Committee On Proposed Activities for the Ensuing Year," 1964 Annual Report of St. Martin's Council on Human Relations. Box 023/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁴³ Report, St. Martin's Human Relation's Council, 1963-1964 and 1964-1965, June 6, 1965.

friendships.” The dialogue should “improve our awareness of our own hidden prejudices and stereotyped ideas, by talking together of our own human similarities and cultural differences.” Eventually, participants would be expected to discuss “our major social problems in housing, education and employment and to seek practical ways to solve these.” White and black members of St. Martin’s Council would be designated team co-leaders. Each was to invite neighbors and friends to join in the home-based dialogues. Group discussion would follow a program of topics and questions prepared by the St. Martin’s Council. A similar program began in Chicago in 1955, sponsored by Friendship House, an interracial Catholic institution. There is no evidence to indicate how well the home dialogue program worked in Atlanta. But in Chicago in 1963 one participant reported that “from the thousands of people who have participated in these visits over the past few years, a great many incidences of rather dramatic changes in attitude” resulted.⁴⁴

One of the prominent laymen with whom Archbishop Hallinan consulted before issuing his 1962 pastoral letter announcing the integration of schools was Sam Phillips McKenzie, a judge of the Superior Court of the Atlanta Judicial District. In December 1963 McKenzie forwarded to Hallinan two speeches he had recently delivered to African-American groups in Atlanta. McKenzie spoke “as a Judge and not as a Catholic”; but he hoped the speeches “did, to a very small extent, impress upon Negro leaders, at least indirectly, the effect of the Church’s teaching on those of us in public life.” In acknowledging receipt of the speeches in Hallinan’s absence, diocesan

⁴⁴ “Racial Harmony: Preparation Lag Hinders Effort,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 4, 1963, p. 1; “Negroes Host White Visitors,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 4, 1963, p. 2.

chancellor Reverend Harold J. Rainey informed the justice that “I noticed a good deal of Catholic doctrine in your talk.”⁴⁵

In November 1963, McKenzie addressed Atlanta’s First Congregational Church (Negro) at the invitation of one of its chief laymen, “My very close friend, Mr. Yates.” He argued that strengthening the bonds of the “brotherhood of men” was the key to achieving racial justice. McKenzie noted that American Christians had extensive practice at making “lofty statements, neat phrases and pious pronouncements concerning the brotherhood of man.” But their actions did not always measure up to their rhetoric. McKenzie stated his “firm conviction” that Christians needed “a more realistic concept of the meaning of brotherhood” and the ability to put “that concept into practice in our daily life.” The struggle for racial justice was central to the battle against “the communist, anti-Christ philosophy and the practitioners thereof.” This was not an economic problem, but “a struggle for the minds of men.” And churches were best situated to accomplish that task. For McKenzie the success of the civil rights battle for racial equality would be determined by how successful churches were in teaching and demonstrating “the Christian concept of the brotherhood of man.”⁴⁶

McKenzie conceded that often white Christians evinced “a baffling union of strong piety along with strong prejudice.” He also recognized the “right of good men to disagree” about the tactics used to achieve racial equality. Nevertheless, individual churches, McKenzie claimed, “must make it clear that a failure to recognize the equal

⁴⁵ From Sam Phillips McKenzie, Atlanta to Hallinan, December 31, 1963; From Rev. Harold J. Rainey to McKenzie, January 2, 1964, Box 036/6, Folder 50, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁶ From McKenzie to Hallinan, December 31, 1963.

rights of all men is incompatible with the teachings of the Church as to the brotherhood of man." The Atlanta judge made it clear that he did not advocate "political action within the Church--but I do advocate practicing what we preach." Indeed, Christian faith compelled action of some sort, even if that resulted in conflict within churches. McKenzie called for Christians, both lay and clerical, to "continue to criticize" gradualism and white appeals to African-American patience. McKenzie concluded with a simple solution: "If we practice, in our daily lives, what we preach, we are making a significant contribution in the struggle for the minds of men."⁴⁷

Although not a participant in civil rights demonstrations, McKenzie was part of a growing ecumenical movement. Moderate and liberal Catholics were beginning to recognize that they had much in common with Christians of other denominations. Catholic doctrine, they believed, certainly contained all the necessary elements to solve the South's racial problems. Yet Catholics alone could not produce lasting change by themselves. The members of St. Martin's Council on Human Relations who participated in other civic groups demonstrated this same interfaith commitment. Archbishop Hallinan created an environment conducive to such cooperation. His friendships with Jewish and Protestant leaders and with secular civic officials set prominent examples. Also, the *Georgia Bulletin*, the archdiocesan newspaper, under the editorial leadership of Gerard Sherry, regularly engaged secular and ecumenical issues. Through his paper, Sherry demonstrated the boundaries of Christian liberals' support for the civil rights movement. His uncompromising arguments for racial justice

⁴⁷ *ibid.*; emphasis in original.

and integration made him a prominent white liberal. But for him Christian social justice stopped when “extremists” displaced the moral vision of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. Those extremists preferred violence to Christian morality and proved more racially divisive than interracially unifying.

Hallinan had founded the archdiocesan newspaper in January 1963. The first two issues described the organ’s purpose as “the representative mouthpiece of all Catholic thinking and information. It must protect the vital interests of Catholics in a community . . . [and it] must fight for the reform of any conditions which are a denial of the dignity of man or an obstacle to his progress.”⁴⁸ One pressing issue, the editorial board noted, was “the problem of race.” The nation faced two choices: “being heroically faithful to our country’s most ancient and honorable ideals, or being locked in a trap made by money and supported by neurosis.” America must be able to rely on the Catholic Church for help, the *Bulletin* warned. Both the “injured man of color” and the “warped man who hates” should be able to turn to the Church. The man of color should find a “helping hand,” while the hateful man must not “find fire for his prejudice, but instead the cool balm of reason and the reassuring strength of maturity. By very definition, a Catholic is an integrationist.” It was the duty of the Catholic newspaper, and Catholics everywhere, “to make this clear to all who will listen.”⁴⁹

The archbishop set the newspaper’s agenda and then turned over the reins to Sherry, an experienced journalist, with two priests to assist the layman. The editor

⁴⁸ “What We Are About (Part 1),” *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 4, 1963, p. 4.

⁴⁹ “What We Are About (Part 2),” *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 11, 1963, p. 4.

wasted little time engaging secular civil rights issues that had ramifications outside the Church. Only a couple of issues into the new organ's existence, Sherry attacked Atlanta's "'Wall' of Shame," a metal and concrete barrier intended literally to block black migration into white neighborhoods on the west side of the city. In efforts to restrict African-American movement into previously all-white neighborhoods, the city of Atlanta built new roads or put up other physical obstacles to enforce racial segregation. In late 1962 a black doctor attempted to purchase a house in the Peyton Forest subdivision, an otherwise white development. White residents requested that two roads (Peyton and Harlan) be closed to north-south travel and barricades constructed in order to protect the integrity of the neighborhood boundaries. The city, with Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.'s blessing, complied, until unfavorable publicity threatened to spoil Atlanta's civil rights image.⁵⁰

Sherry saw racial conflict over "The Wall" as yet another element of a perennial problem, insuring blacks' rights to obtain decent housing in nice neighborhoods while dealing with white fears. If one were honest, however, those "White fears" would fall under a different heading—"prejudice. This vice is hidden in all our hearts" and surfaced only when confronted with racial problems. Removing prejudice "requires the fullness of charity and humility." But most whites—"even among Catholics"—lacked an essential understanding of the "unity of the human family," Sherry acknowledged. The Church was ostensibly integrated, but the ideal of the Catholic community disappeared "at the exit of our churches and chapels." Whites had deprived blacks of opportunities

⁵⁰ See Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, pp. 66–68; and Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*, pp. 308–312.

to advance "culturally and materially" and forced them "to go from one ghetto to another." "If Catholics can only join together on this crucial issue," Sherry predicted, "we would be well on our way to solving a major obstacle to good racial relations."⁵¹

When the Fulton County Superior Court forced the city to remove the wall two months later, Sherry praised the decision as "the opportunity to show the rest of the country that it [Atlanta] is way ahead in establishing harmonious race relations." Sherry the racially liberal Catholic layman supported the right of blacks to "decent housing in decent neighborhoods," but warned that achieving integrated neighborhoods would take time. "A call for patience in this regard," however, "must not be construed as promotion of the heresy of gradualism."⁵² Indeed, Sherry was not one to show much patience for those who believed that anything less than immediate integration was sufficient. He saw the need for demonstrations and was not surprised that blacks might be impatient at the lack of progress. But Sherry drew distinctions within both the black and white community and singled out "extremists" who only caused trouble. He favored a type of moral center, based on a commonly accepted natural law that was recognized across denominational divides, by Jews and Protestants alike.

When Klansmen set off a bomb at Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in September 1963, Sherry blamed "extremists" who had been in control "while the so-called moderates have been satisfied with pious clichés unrelated to the basic problem." In that instance, the extremists were white, for whom the Church had made

⁵¹ Gerard Sherry, "The 'Wall' of Shame," *The Georgia Bulletin*, January 17, 1963, p. 4.

⁵² "Wall Is Down," *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 7, 1963, p. 4.

clear the immorality of segregation. White Catholics should stake out the moral center, "rise above the mob, and consciously accept the teaching of the Church."⁵³ But civil rights activists could be equally guilty of extremism. In 1963 when the Supreme Court reversed the convictions of lunch counter demonstrators in four southern states, Sherry praised the decision but also cautioned that "we must not read into it a mandate to indiscriminate trespass." Sherry questioned recent Atlanta disturbances in which sit-in demonstrators singled out a restaurant owned by "a confirmed segregationist." He deplored the restaurateur's "harsh reaction"; although, "it seemed silly . . . at this stage to goad him with their actions." Progress would only "be speeded by the calm balm of reason on both sides."⁵⁴

Sherry and other Catholic liberals favored the moral suasion of Martin Luther King, Jr. over the violence and intimidation of black nationalists. Sherry warned that any attempt to abandon "the non-violent rule in Negro demonstrations would be fatal. It would assist only the White extremists who desperately seek ways to avoid general acceptance of the Negro as an equal."⁵⁵ Non-violent demonstrations were necessary components of the moral middle, efforts "to establish a right which has always been theirs, but which always has been denied them." According to Sherry, full equality for African Americans appeared inevitable in 1963. The question was whether that occurred "through the voice of nonviolent leaders like Martin Luther King, or through

⁵³ "A Negro Child," *The Georgia Bulletin*, September 19, 1963, p. 4.

⁵⁴ "Court Ruling," *The Georgia Bulletin*, May 23, 1963, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Gerard E. Sherry, "Support The 'March' But . . .", *The Georgia Bulletin*, August 22, 1963. See also, idem, "The Arrests in Baltimore," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 18, 1963, p. 4.

the violent approach of Black Muslims or other 'white-haters.'" The "Christian conscience cries out against injustice," and the civil rights movement needed Christian leadership.⁵⁶

Fear of extremism, Sherry warned, should not lead to inaction. "Religious leaders, especially," he explained, "should be careful that they do not lead their congregation into a state of ennui, simply because to take a strong stand would rock a boat or a congregation." Instead, "a just and peaceful solution" required ecumenical cooperation and action. That ecumenism should be based on a common "natural-law morality" which "everybody with a normal human mind should be able to understand and accept." Catholics had "additional and deeper reasons for respecting human rights," but both Protestants and Jews saw the injustice of racial discrimination "as clearly as do Catholics."⁵⁷ And people of good will--those "million southerners" who, according to Father Leonard F. X. Mayhew, gradually had developed a "real desire for justice"--would determine the ultimate success of the movement. Those self-styled moderate whites must not abandon their sympathy with "the Negro's struggle" because civil rights demands had grown more immediate and less patient. The goal--equal rights in education, voting, housing, and employment--remained the same. "Only acceptance by

⁵⁶ Gerard E. Sherry, "Racial Crisis Coming To A Head," *The Georgia Bulletin*, June 13, 1963, p. 4. See also "Calm Is Restored," *The Georgia Bulletin*, February 6, 1964, p. 4; Sherry, "Extremism A Virtue," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 30, 1964, p. 4.

⁵⁷ "Unity of Purpose," *The Georgia Bulletin*, May 30, 1963, p. 4. See also "'Patriotic' Racists," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 9, 1964, p. 4.

the sane segment of society will make whatever legal progress is achieved stable and permanent."⁵⁸

The moral middle that Sherry believed should guide civil rights activism always emphasized the common good over individual rights, a doctrine that the Georgia layman located in Catholic doctrine. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the purpose of any social organization "is to help its members and never to destroy or absorb them." Social functions, according to Catholic doctrine, were always conducted by the smallest group possible. The principle emphasizes individual property rights, but many whites, Sherry noted, invoked it "to justify their refusal to allow Negroes to be served on their property." But "individual property rights are not absolute." The common good must always prevail.⁵⁹ Sherry used this principle to justify support of the Civil Rights Act. When the 1964 bill passed the House of Representatives, Sherry editorialized that it was "an encouraging step in the quest for racial justice." The *Bulletin's* editor attacked the Atlanta Restaurant Association, whose "trite clichés out of the past" insisted that their property rights had to prevail over equal rights for Negroes. On the contrary, Sherry argued, the common good—which included an end to racial discrimination—justified state intervention. Indeed, the "failure of individuals and groups, including some restaurant owners, to fulfill their social obligations to the community, has made such legislative coercion necessary."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Leonard F. X. Mayhew, "Race Problem Complex," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 4, 1963, p. 4. See also Mayhew, "Sub-Rational Violence," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 16, 1964, p. 5.

⁵⁹ "Subsidiary Function," *The Georgia Bulletin*, October 31, 1963, p. 4.

⁶⁰ "The Common Good," *The Georgia Bulletin*, February 13, 1964, p. 4.

Sherry's editorials elicited a variety of responses from Georgia's Catholics. Some refuted the use of Catholic doctrine to challenge constitutionally protected individual and property rights. Fred T. Humphrey, a Catholic from Smyrna, Georgia, requested that the *Bulletin* no longer be sent to his home, since its "articles are generally fuzzy and without logic or substance." The editorial in support of the Civil Rights Act, moreover, was "a blow to personal freedom." Contrary to Sherry's claim that divine law should serve the general welfare of society, Humphrey argued for a strict separation of church and state. "'[D]ivine law' for each religious denomination has different meanings," he noted, "and for the agnostic and the atheist, divine law means nothing. If this is to be a free country, then it must be guided by civil laws, not divine laws." Humphrey then noted the unique stance of the American Catholic Church. In countries where Catholics constituted the majority of the population, the Church "openly or silently endorsed" laws that discriminated against other denominations." The Church, therefore, "is obviously against the separation of Church and State when that church is Catholic."⁶¹

In separate letters to the editor, two Atlanta men later engaged the issue of the constitutionality of the public accommodations section of the 1964 act. Daniel J. O'Connor, Jr. described himself as "sympathetic as almost anyone to the desperate plight of the American negro"; yet he accused the *Bulletin's* editor of accepting uncritically any action "proposed in the name of racial equality" without considering its "other non-racial effects." O'Connor opposed the public accommodations portion of

⁶¹ Fred T. Humphrey, Smyrna, GA, Letter to the Editor, *The Georgia Bulletin*, February 20, 1964, p. 6.

the bill, "an ominous section" that threatened to "abridge the freedom of association and right of privacy accorded all citizens, regardless of race, creed or color." African Americans might benefit in the short run, but they "would suffer with all citizens under its long term yoke--the deprivation of personal liberty." So those congressman and others who opposed the bill were not necessarily "fainthearted" or racist. Instead, they labored to keep congressional authority within the prescribed boundaries of the constitution.⁶²

Ferdinand Buckley, on the other hand, defended the constitutionality of the proposed Civil Rights Act and argued that it was consistent with current Georgia law. Buckley was an Atlanta attorney and president of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men in 1964. He claimed that anyone who based his opposition to the public accommodations section of the civil rights bill "upon constitutional grounds is in danger of stretching the Constitution, if nothing else." Common law, Buckley argued, evolved to delineate the obligations of, for example, both innkeepers and travelers. And the Georgia Code of 1933 spelled out the relationships between proprietors and their customers. The businessperson who advertises his services "'is bound to receive as guests, as far as he can accommodate them, all persons of good character offering themselves, who are willing to comply with his rules.'" The public accommodations provision of both Georgia state law and the 1964 Civil Rights Act "is completely supported by logic and justice," Buckley concluded. Indeed, the common law support for the provision dated to the scriptural account of the Good Samaritan. "Nothing has

⁶² Daniel J. O'Connor, Atlanta, Letter to the Editor, *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 26, 1964, p. 7.

happened since then to make it or any of the principles embodied in the Civil Rights Bill unreasonable, unconstitutional or un-Christlike.”⁶³

Editors of the *Georgia Bulletin* agreed. In April 1964 they devoted half a page of news column to an explanation of various aspects of the Civil Rights Act. “Sharing as we do the sense of urgency attached by the Administration” and other agencies, the editors published a summary of the bill and answers to questions about it. They drew the material from a pamphlet published by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. They concluded that the “summary correctly points out that the bill does not attempt to abolish prejudice by law.” A person had a right to his or her individual prejudices. “But he does not have the right to translate them into actions that deny or infringe on the rights and liberties of others.”⁶⁴

When Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in July 1964, Sherry declared its passage “a time of unbridled joy.” But there should also be “some sombre reflection on its implications.” The act merely reinforced the constitutionality of--and provided legal support for--those rights that African Americans should have already enjoyed. But with the formal recognition of those rights, Sherry argued, came certain obligations and responsibilities. The “Negro community must begin to develop that mark of maturity and stability which many of their critics say they do not possess.” In addition, they would be expected “to grasp willingly and diligently the new opportunities of education and jobs in the self-advancement so urgently required.” The passage of the Civil Rights

⁶³ Ferdinand Buckley, Atlanta, Letter to the Editor, *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 2, 1964, p. 5.

⁶⁴ “Explanation Of Various Titles In Civil Rights Bill,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 9, 1964, p. 2.

Act should be the necessary transition point between “belligerency” and “a more friendly approach” that held no animosity toward whites. Giving up their “belligerency” required a lot from blacks, Sherry acknowledged, “for they have suffered much at the hands of many of us, and for many years.” Their “maturity,” however, would best be measured “in their being able to forgive.” Both white and black Catholics should be able to assist in this transition. Because of Catholics’ responsibility to the Mystical Body of Christ, they “must strive for the betterment of [their] neighbors, Negroes included, with the same energy that divine blessings are sought for self.”⁶⁵ But not all Atlanta Catholics complied. In August 1964, barely a month after the Act’s passage, one restaurant owner refused lunch service to four businessmen because two of them (an attorney and an architect) were black.⁶⁶

When Martin Luther King, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, his hometown stood to suffer a very public black eye if white Atlantans did not acknowledge the award and honor their native son. The city had worked hard in the 1960s to cultivate an image of racial moderation coupled with New South progress, and failure to honor King would have tarnished its national reputation. But most of Atlanta’s white leaders proved reluctant to honor the man whom they blamed for causing racial unrest and boycotting downtown businesses. No white businessmen would take the initiative. Archbishop Hallinan joined with three other prominent Atlantans (two white, one black)—Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, Morehouse College president Benjamin Mays, and Atlanta

⁶⁵ Sherry, “Now, Negro Response,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 9, 1964, p. 4.

⁶⁶ “Non-Compliance,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, August 6, 1964, p. 4. See also “Georgia’s Image,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 29, 1965, p. 4.

Constitution editor Ralph McGill--to sponsor a banquet in January 1965 in honor of the civil rights leader. Racially liberal mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. tried but failed to rally the white business community, some of whom bought tickets at the last minute only to avoid embarrassment.⁶⁷

Governor Carl Sanders neither attended nor sent an official representative. No leaders of the city's white Protestant churches were there either; although, the secretary of the Georgia Council of Churches spoke.⁶⁸ The archbishop left a hospital stay early to attend the banquet at Atlanta's Dinkler Plaza Hotel ballroom. Two decades later, Mayor Allen recalled that "Archbishop Hallinan was a prime mover in seeing that the business community supported that dinner."⁶⁹ And King himself wrote "to express my deep gratitude for your sponsorship of the dinner honoring me." King described Hallinan's brief tribute as "both eloquent and moving and I shall treasure them amongst the storehouse of memories as a light of encouragement for the many dark and desolate days of struggle which are before us."⁷⁰ Hallinan praised the civil rights leader as "a pioneer in a new dynamic of peace . . . a creative leader in racial justice, as a man . . . who has

⁶⁷ On the behind-the-scenes negotiations necessary to insure an interracial banquet, see Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*, pp. 334-340; and Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963 - 1965*, pp. 568-570.

⁶⁸ Gerard E. Sherry, "Whites, Negroes Join Salute To Dr. King," *The Georgia Bulletin*, February 4, 1965, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan*, p. 230.

⁷⁰ From Martin Luther King, Jr. to Hallinan, March 8, 1965. Box 001/2, Folder 7, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

raised justice through non-violence from a tactic to a high form of authentic Christian love."⁷¹

The Atlanta dinner honored King as he and other civil rights activists were intensifying their efforts to resolve voting rights abuses in Selma. King left Selma to attend the banquet and returned there the next day determined to increase the pressure on white officials. The 1965 Selma demonstrations challenged Alabama's social status quo and revealed the extent to which the state's white Catholics separated themselves from their church's moral authority and identified with the South's racial hierarchy. When Archbishop Toolen criticized the participation of priests and nuns in the marches, many whites rallied to his defense and claimed him as their religious spokesman. Even a handful of Georgians turned to him, disgruntled over their own archbishop's liberal stands.⁷² Six Atlanta priests requested permission to go to Selma and participate in the marches. Hallinan first refused the request, fearing for the safety of his priests. Within twenty-four hours, however, the archbishop reversed himself and granted permission. "No priest or laymen was sent," Hallinan wrote a few weeks later in response to critics; "they asked to go with approval—and it was given."⁷³ Hallinan granted permission on the condition that their parish work not be neglected and that they give only one sermon the following Sunday explaining their participation and the significance of the demonstrations. The participation of Atlanta priests was important, in Hallinan's mind.

⁷¹ "Remarks of Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan at Civic Dinner Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Atlanta, January 27, 1965," Box 001/6, Folder 42, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁷² See Chapter 5.

⁷³ "Archbishop's Notebook," *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 1, 1965, p. 2.

They were southern priests who “testified to the overwhelmingly good element in the South and this, I feel, was often overlooked by many who came to Selma to demonstrate.”⁷⁴

Reforms of Vatican II created--in a sense--a new Catholic Church, the outlines of which were still being defined in 1965. And much as their Alabama counterparts did, some Atlanta-area white Catholics associated civil rights agitation with the confusion in their Church in the mid-1960s. Some Atlantans expressed their grievances directly to Hallinan or to the editor of the *Georgia Bulletin*, upset over the changing nature of the church in the mid-1960s and what they perceived as a lack of properly instituted authority. Still others defended the voting rights demonstrations and either participated or served in support roles.

One Atlanta man expressed his outrage that Catholic priests and nuns “dignified” the “self-professed civil disobedience demonstrations.” His reasoning was instructive. Priests and nuns’ “whole life is dedicated to obedience to authority,” and in his mind, evidently, their civil rights agitation undermined the authority of the Church in the South. This anonymous Atlantan echoed the concerns of Archbishop Toolen and other Alabamians. “When priests and nuns are sent in from other dioceses, over the expressed opposition of the local bishop,” the man wrote Hallinan, “I am seriously concerned about our newly revised Catholic Church.” At the very least, he suggested,

⁷⁴ “Wherever They Go, Christians Witness For Christ,” Interview with Hallinan by Msgr. Vincent A. Yzermans, *Our Sunday Visitor*, Fort Wayne-South Bend Edition, Magazine Section 55 (July 24, 1966), pp. 4–5.

those priests and nuns should concentrate on their home parishes and “the alleviation of these political ills” there.⁷⁵

An Atlanta woman and her family announced their intention to withhold their financial contributions to the Church “as long as members of the Holy Orders make ridiculous public spectacles of themselves in cheap nigger politics.” Instead, because their religious leaders had been “mesmerized by a protestant, common rabble-rouser,” their money would go to “the white Police fund in Selma and Montgomery, Alabama.”⁷⁶ Others were not as harshly opposed to civil rights reform in principle, but they expressed discomfort with the tactics employed in Selma. These gradualists eschewed the immediate results demanded by activists in favor of piecemeal reform that might result from moral suasion. Leo E. Reichert, Jr., of Decatur, Georgia, argued that there were Catholics “who believe in the brotherhood of Christ and the dignity and equality of the negro in the eyes of God,” but who opposed civil disobedience “and obvious incitements to violence.” Archbishop Toolen, Reichert claimed, was in a better situation to evaluate local problems and his authority should have been respected.⁷⁷

Another Decatur resident blamed priests and nuns’ newfound racial justice activism on the Church’s recent emphasis on ecumenism. “Isn’t ecumenism wonderful?” J. J. Conoley, Jr. questioned in a sarcastic letter to the editor of the *Georgia*

⁷⁵ “Archbishop’s Notebook,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 1, 1965, p. 2. Hallinan refused to name his correspondents in his newspaper column, and this particular series of correspondence is, according to Hallinan’s biographer, in the possession of someone other than the Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

⁷⁶ Archbishop’s Notebook,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 1, 1965, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Leo E. Reichert, Jr., Letter to the Editor, *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 8, 1965, p. 8.

Bulletin. Only a few years earlier, nuns would not have been “parading with beatniks on Pennsylvania Avenue” or “arm-in-arm with Negro men in Selma.” And priests would not have turned to lawbreaking “rather than to ‘render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s.’” Those priests and nuns who demonstrated “in a carnival spirit,” Conoley argued, took the easy way out. More appropriate would have been working “tireless hours at thankless tasks, such as, teaching Negroes to be qualified to vote.” Conoley ignored the main focus of the Selma-to-Montgomery march--the lack of voting rights for Alabama’s blacks. But he was quick to sound a theme common to many white southerners at the time. The outsiders should have minded their own affairs back home instead of being allowed “to invade another Diocese.”⁷⁸

Official archdiocesan policy was clear, however, and Atlantans did play a role in the demonstrations. One Atlanta woman called her participation in the march to Montgomery “the most deeply moving spiritual experience of my life.” Immediately after the march, Janet Rogan went to the chapel of Montgomery’s Catholic hospital “to offer my Thanksgiving.” She pondered “the solitude of the Blessed Sacrament” and longed for the sacrament to “have been there with us instead of behind those tabernacle doors.” Christ had marched to Calvary “to change the political and social order for all men,” and the physical presence of his body and blood could have emboldened the marchers. But Rogan inadvertently pointed to one of the theological transitions that resulted from the Second Vatican Council--the reclarification of the church as the people of God. During the march, she noted being “acutely aware of the Presence of

⁷⁸ J. J. Conoley, Jr., Letter to the Editor, *The Georgia Bulletin*, April 15, 1965, p. 8.

God among His people in an atmosphere of Love and Suffering.” For Rogan, then, the civil rights movement provided a concrete example of the conciliar doctrine and an opportunity to practice the ecumenism encouraged by her archbishop.

The priests who participated in the Selma to Montgomery march took their turn among the clergy who led prayers on the “front line” of demonstrators as they confronted Alabama state troopers. In addition to those six priests, one lay member of St. Martin’s Human Relations Council went to Selma for the demonstrations. And other laymen assisted from Atlanta. Many would-be demonstrators were left in the lurch in Atlanta’s airport enroute to Selma. Dr. Joseph Wilbur served as the contact person for them. “Five or six times during the Selma crisis,” the president of St. Martin’s Council reported, Wilbur picked people up at the airport. One night six priests and six laymen slept in his home, and other council members housed additional stranded marchers.⁷⁹

Gerard Sherry reported from Selma for the *Georgia Bulletin*. His March 11 editorial described the brutality of state troopers against marchers as “reminiscent of the worst days of Nazi oppression.” Recent events in Selma were “what we would expect in a Fascist or Communist country where despots survive only by oppression and terror.” States’ rights was not the issue. “The Alabama brutality is a consequence of the indifference of the majority who have remained silent.”⁸⁰ Sherry reported tension within the movement participants themselves. Young and “more militant” activists feared that the presence of clergymen would actually be a “restraining hand in the

⁷⁹ “Contradictions, Tensions Major Hallmark of Selma,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 18, 1965, p. 1; Report, St. Martin’s Human Relations Council, 1963-1964 and 1964-1965, June 6, 1965.

⁸⁰ Gerard Sherry, “National Shame,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 11, 1965, p. 4.

frequent demonstrations” and hinder civil rights progress. But Sherry credited the religious presence in Selma with enabling “the extraction of concessions from the city fathers which they never would have contemplated if they had had to deal only with local Negroes.”⁸¹

Voting rights marchers eventually completed the trek to Montgomery and later that year President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. With its passage and that of the Civil Rights Act the year before, civil rights activists essentially achieved their legal goals—equality of opportunity. But the Selma demonstrations carried even greater significance. They helped delineate the boundaries separating Catholic proponents of civil rights from opponents of racial equality and any threat to the status quo. Success in Selma emboldened supporters of the movement and decreased the moral authority—at least among activists—of church leaders like Toolen whose criticism of demonstrators only encouraged defiance. Archbishop Hallinan, by contrast, increased efforts to use the Church as a tool to improve racial justice,

On July 28, 1965, Archbishop Hallinan convened a three-day conference on “Social Change and Christian Response” in Atlanta. The archdiocese co-sponsored the event with the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, and the St. Martin’s Council on Human Relations served as local host for the meeting. The conference brought together five bishops and “several hundred” priests, nuns, and Catholic and Protestant laymen representing twenty-five dioceses and fifteen states to discuss civil rights legislation and the Church’s responsibilities in racial and social justice. In

⁸¹ “Contradictions, Tensions Major Hallmark of Selma,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 18, 1965, p. 1.

addition, representatives of civil rights organizations such as the Southern Regional Council, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference also led panel discussions and conference sessions.⁸²

In his explanation of the need for the conference on the front page of the *Georgia Bulletin*, Hallinan claimed that the nation had moved out of the "frontier" stage of racial unrest and into the "Era of the Market-place." This new era would be less dramatic than the frontier and call for "more reason; less impatience, more experience; less headlining and more hard work." It would be the time when whites and blacks cooperated and learned "to practice Christian love or else stop talking about it." Necessary work "includes voter registration, action for decent employment and housing, vigilance that integrated schools will insure integrated education, and the overall guarantee that whites and Negroes can live together in justice and charity."⁸³

In his keynote address, Hallinan encouraged Catholics and other religious activists not to abandon the fight for racial and social justice to secular forces. Their moral leadership was necessary. Clergy and nuns in the Selma demonstrations were "not shock troops to be exploited. They are witnesses to justice and love, giving their presence to communities where justice and love have been diminished." They were "co-workers with the Negro in the great social development that is in process." Hallinan then emphasized the recent Vatican Council's "entirely new grasp of what the Church means." Rather than the Church being defined solely as a hierarchical

⁸² "Southern Catholics' Meet Set On Human Relations Today," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 29, 1965, p. 1; "Social Change and Christian Response Program," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 29, 1965.

⁸³ "Race - Frontier and the Market Place," *The Georgia Bulletin*, July 29, 1965, p. 1.

institution, the Council emphasized the notion of the Church as the "People of God." This recasting of that traditional doctrine was based on the Pauline image of the Church as organic Mystical Body of Christ and stressed the servant nature of the Church. For Hallinan, this meant that the Church--that is, those people from bishops to laity who constituted Catholicism--"must initiate and quicken the Christian response as a catalyst accelerates the change in a chemical process."⁸⁴

Hallinan created an environment for the members of his archdiocese to engage in this sort of Christian activism. And he forced upon white Catholics the opportunities--and obligations--to live as the people of God within archdiocesan institutions. Archbishop Hallinan moved ahead of other bishops and church leaders in encouraging racial justice; but circumstances in secular southern society often dictated the timing and success of Hallinan's initiatives. He did make it increasingly difficult, it would seem, for area white Catholics to ignore the implications of their faith. The archdiocese that had assumed a prominent role in the transformation of the liturgy had also taken an equally public role in the fight for racial justice. Just as Alabama and Georgia represented two sides of the same South, so the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham and the Archdiocese of Atlanta revealed two sides of the same Church. For Alabama, the hierarchy and certain orthodoxy of the pre-Vatican II Church best suit southern society. For Atlanta, the post-conciliar notion of the church as the people of God, with less emphasis on the Church as hierarchical institution, promised to bring the Church into the modern South. For both dioceses, the late 1960s brought a crisis of authority that

⁸⁴ "Archbishop Hallinan Cites Church In Human Relations," *The Georgia Bulletin*, August 5, 1965, p. 1.

complicated the relationships between bishops and their people and between the Church and secular southern society.

CHAPTER 7
"FREEDOM IS A WONDERFUL THING, BUT . . .":
RACE AND THE CATHOLIC CRISIS OF AUTHORITY, 1966-1975

In February 1967, the editor of *The Catholic Week*, Reverend Francis Wade, concluded that "Freedom is a wonderful thing" except when it "degenerates into license" and caused a neglect of responsibility and obligations. Indeed, license "is only another word for free-wheeling, wild-swinging, emotion-packed misuse of freedom." Freedom of conscience, Wade wrote, must always be characterized by "zeal and love for the truth." And it must always maintain "the correct attitude toward the Church's teaching and its magisterium, and the authority of its bishops." Wade echoed language from the Vatican Council's "Declaration on Religious Liberty." From his perspective, however, many Catholics in 1967 misused that document and placed their own consciences in direct conflict with episcopal authority. "We have more than our share of people, priests and Sisters, as well as members of the laity, tearing things apart in the name of freedom of conscience."¹ It is unclear whether Wade had in mind priests and nuns in the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham only, or if he wrote based on his knowledge of the American Catholic Church in general in the late 1960s. Either way, as someone concerned about the erosion of ecclesiastic authority, he had much to complain about.

¹ "Freedom Is A Wonderful Thing, But . . .", *The Catholic Week*, February 10, 1967, p. 6.

Emboldened by the reforms of Vatican II, priests and nuns nationwide had increased their civil rights activism following the 1965 Selma voting rights demonstrations.² At the Council in Rome, the bishops affirmed the right of individual religious freedom. Catholics should be governed by their conscience and “immune from coercion by individuals, social groups and every human power” so that they would not be “forced to act against their convictions.”³ The Council also redefined the nature of the church and effectively crafted a new theological foundation for increased social activism. Instead of understanding the church to be primarily a hierarchical institution, the Council introduced the concept of the church as the “People of God” intended to serve their fellow human beings. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* announced that “the baptized are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.” To be sure, the Council left in place the formal offices of bishops and clergy, but “the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less interrelated.”⁴

The Council also encouraged the faithful to read “the signs of the times and [interpret] them in the light of the Gospel.”⁵ As a result, priests and nuns began to identify more closely with the disadvantaged, the marginalized, and the underprivileged. Catholic lay activists followed as the civil rights movement branched

² See McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, pp. 155–158.

³ “Declaration on Religious Liberty,” *The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), p. 552.

⁴ “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” *The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, p. 14.

⁵ “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” *The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, p. 165.

out and placed greater emphasis on class as well as racial inequalities. Not all Catholics were comfortable with this increased agitation, however, and the accompanying “freedom of conscience” that reformers seemed to exploit. At the same time, some Catholics in the late 1960s continued to question the Church’s moral authority over its own people, let alone over society at large.⁶ Racial tension persisted, but by the early 1970s, both the Archdiocese of Atlanta and the Diocese of Mobile (the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham split into two dioceses in 1969) had institutionalized social action and accepted the importance of issues that earlier had split the Church.

In Atlanta Archbishop Hallinan had successfully implemented conciliar reforms and at least ostensibly had overcome racial problems within his own archdiocesan institutions. Beginning in 1962, parochial school integration occurred relatively smoothly, and a year later Hallinan announced an open admission policy for Catholic hospitals as well. In March 1963 he declared, with the “full cooperation” of the female religious orders who ran the two local hospitals, that patients would be admitted “without regard to race or color.”⁷ But an end to de facto segregation did not happen easily. Members of the all-white medical staff at St. Joseph’s infirmary, for example, resisted admitting black doctors to practice; and when integration of the staff did occur,

⁶ Osborne, *The Segregated Covenant*.

⁷ “Official Statement: Admission Policy, Catholic Hospitals in the Archdiocese of Atlanta,” *The Georgia Bulletin*, March 28, 1963, p. 7; Memo from Sr. Mary Melanie, R.S.M., Administrator to Chief Admission Officer and All Employees in the Department of Admissions, July 27, 1965; Memo from Sr. M. Jacob, Administrator to Sr. M. Geraldine, Nursing Service Director and Mrs. Marjorie Ray, Supervisor Patient Services Dept, June 23, 1966. Box 065/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

some white physicians withdrew and referred patients elsewhere. The number of white patients admitted to St. Joseph's decreased as well immediately following the decision.⁸

In June 1966, however, both Atlanta Catholic hospitals, St. Joseph's and Holy Family, failed to comply with civil rights regulations under the new Medicare program. The Office of Equal Health Opportunity accused both hospitals of admitting patients and referring them to rooms according to race. The federal agency also charged that St. Joseph's limited the opportunities for Negro staff members.⁹ Hallinan himself responded via telephone. He summarized the archdiocese's integration history and claimed that hospital desegregation occurred solely because of the "moral imperatives of justice and mercy" and not because of governmental sanction. Both hospitals, Hallinan claimed, had "borne the brunt of integration" and risked "enduring the stigma of some whites that they would probably become de facto 'Negro hospitals.'"¹⁰

The charges, however, appeared to have sound basis in fact. The availability of qualified African-American physicians limited the hospitals' ability to comply with federal standards. Between 1963 and 1966, seven black physicians applied to work on the staff of St. Joseph's. One was hired. Three of the others were not accredited in their fields, one did not follow up his application, and two applied as surgeons, a

⁸ Schwalm, ed., "In His Own Words: Paul J. Hallinan, Archbishop of Atlanta, 1962-1968," p. 15.

⁹ From Robert M. Nash, Chief, Office of Equal Health Opportunity to Sister Mary Melanie, Administrator, St. Joseph's Infirmary, Atlanta, June 21, 1966; From Nash to Sister Mary Jacob Engelhardt, Administrator, Holy Family Hospital, Atlanta, Box 065/2, Folder 1; "U.S. Okay Given to 7 Hospitals," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 25, 1966, newspaper clipping in Box 065/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA.

¹⁰ Unsigned letter to Secretary John W. Gardner, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., June 21, 1966; and attached Summary, Box 065/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

department with a waiting list in excess of 150. Since the non-compliance charges arose, moreover, six more applied. Four of those were board-certified in specializations where the hospital had openings and probably would be hired. At Holy Family Hospital, the nuns had allowed segregation based on race whenever white patients complained. They did this "simply to keep it from becoming a defacto [*sic*] Negro segregated hospital." But if the federal agency insisted, Holy Family would take whatever steps necessary to implement a random room admission policy, "even if it means that this will eventually produce an all-Negro hospital or close its doors and beds."¹¹ Within a few days, both hospitals took the necessary measures to reach full federal compliance.¹²

The imposition of federal authority marked a new era for civil rights enforcement and reveals the outlines--and continuing ambivalence--of the Catholic Church in Georgia's relationship to secular society. That St. Joseph's and Holy Family Hospitals would feel pressure to placate white patients reveals that Hallinan's and Sherry's initiatives and arguments for racial justice had not convinced everyone. Nevertheless, Hallinan had introduced--and Sherry encouraged--a new spirit of reform that marginalized racial and liturgical dissent. Following the dictates of the Vatican Council, Hallinan initiated plans to share decision-making responsibilities with the laity and female religious. In 1966 he convoked a Priests' Synod to plot the course of the archdiocese's response to conciliar directives. Also, he convened lay and sister congresses to make recommendations to the Synod. According to the president of the

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Press release, June 24, 1966. Box 065/2, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Lay Congress, including nonclerical churchpeople “gave new emphasis to the already-existing spirit of cooperation and understanding between clergy, religious and laity in North Georgia and to lay assistance to the Church, and served as a stimulus for greater understanding of the Vatican II documents.”¹³

The final decree enacted by the Synod claimed that the foundation of control in the archdiocese was the “‘shared exercise of authority,’ that is, a jurisdiction enlarged, under the influence of the recent Council, by a true consultative process.” The archbishop and priests retained their positions within the church hierarchy, to be sure, but that “true consultative process now broadens the base upon which decisions are reached.” Religious and laity, that is, were to be included at every decision-making level in the archdiocese.¹⁴ The Synod, moreover, drew an implicit connection between liturgical and social reform. A more open archdiocese was well positioned to assume responsibility for solving social inequality. The priests addressed contemporary social problems and recommended appropriate archdiocesan responses. One committee, for example, recommended that Negro parishes be abolished and that all parishes should be territorial. The committee also invited Catholics to “take it upon themselves [to] eliminate segregated [*sic*] housing” and suggested that priests and nuns “become informed about the problems of the Negro community.”¹⁵ In effect, then, members of the

¹³ From James W. Callison, President 1966 Lay Congress, Archdiocese of Atlanta to Dennis M. Robb, Minneapolis, June 10, 1966. Box 006/5, Folder 1, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

¹⁴ *The Church of Christ: Decree Enacted by the First Synod of Archdiocese of Atlanta, 1966*, p. 27. Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

¹⁵ “Area Five, Section 6 – Racial Justice and Love,” Preliminary reports, Archdiocese of Atlanta Synod. Box 006/5, Folder 5, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta. On the relationship between liturgical and social reform, see Margaret M. Kelleher, “Liturgy and Social Transformation: Exploring the Relationship,” *US Catholic Historian* 16 (Fall 1998): 58–70.

Archdiocese of Atlanta created a church in North Georgia that was as Vatican II had envisioned—open, integrated, and more conducive to lay cooperation.

On the other hand, the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham stumbled its way through conciliar reforms and racial integration of diocesan institutions. Archbishop Toolen appointed a liturgical commission, but substantial changes had to wait for his successor, John L. May. In terms of race relations, events of the late 1960s revealed a diocese that had accomplished a measure of progress in racial reform and accepted the necessity of the civil rights movement.¹⁶ Toolen softened his own stance against demonstrations, and he accepted (however belatedly) the importance of Martin Luther King to the success of peaceful racial reform. At the same time, however, it remained a diocese divided by recent interpretations of conciliar reform and disagreement over appropriate tactics necessary to achieve racial justice. White clergy and sisters followed their consciences and joined direct-action demonstrations for economic and racial equality. Toolen's authority over the priests and nuns in his diocese had declined, and racial divisions in his church persisted despite remarkable progress in just a couple of years.

Following King's assassination in April 1968, Toolen expressed his "deep sense of profound regret" at the violent death of the civil rights leader. Toolen called King "a great leader to his people, [and] a true apostle of Christian charity and human brotherhood." The slain civil rights leader's death was "indeed a national tragedy, and this tragedy will be even greater if our future actions show that he has died in vain.

¹⁶ See, for example, "Negro Leader Lauds Attitudes, Actions Toward Racial Harmony," *The Catholic Week*, March 22, 1968, p. 8; "Human Relations Council Hears Talk On Negro-White Community," *The Catholic Week*, April 5, 1968, p. 9; "Inter-faith Good Friday Services In Town Park," *The Catholic Week*, April 19, 1968, p. 3.

This will be so unless our personal and national response on behalf of human dignity and civil rights for which he fought is immediate, honest and productive.” Finally, the archbishop instructed churches in his diocese to schedule masses and memorial services in tribute to King “and as a reminder that the unfinished work for which he gave his life is the responsibility of all of us.”¹⁷ The day following Toolen’s statement, the chancellor of the diocese, Msgr. Oscar H. Lipscomb, instructed all priests that memorial ceremonies—but not masses—may be ecumenical. “Due to the extraordinary nature of such services,” Lipscomb advised, “Protestant ministers may be invited to take part in readings from Sacred Scriptures, Prayers or a brief address.”¹⁸

At first glance, Toolen’s sympathy with King and the mainstream civil rights movement marked a radical transformation for a bishop who in 1965 had criticized the Selma demonstrations and accused King of merely “trying to divide the people.”¹⁹ It is possible only to speculate, but Toolen’s change of heart was probably less complete than it first appears. By 1968 the Mobile-Birmingham prelate found himself in the minority among his fellow bishops, most of whom publicly supported racial justice and the mainstream activism of King. Not issuing a statement following King’s murder in 1968, therefore, would have made Toolen as prominent a public figure—for the wrong reasons—as his 1965 denunciation of priests and nuns in Selma had done.²⁰

¹⁷ “Message From Archbishop,” *The Catholic Week*, April 12, 1968, p. 1; and “Archbishop Toolen Backs Dr. King Memorial Rites,” *The Catholic Week*, April 12, 1968, p. 2.

¹⁸ From Lipscomb, Chancellor to Right Reverend Fathers, April 5, 1968. Toolen papers.

¹⁹ “Archbishop Toolen Criticizes Presence of Priests, Sisters in Demonstrations,” *The Catholic Week*, March 19, 1965, p. 1. See Chapter 5.

²⁰ For other bishops’ reactions to King’s murder, see “Religious Leaders Mourn Dr. Martin Luther King,” *The Catholic Week*, April 12, 1968, pp. 1, 7.

Rev. Richard T. Sadlier, the Josephite pastor of Mobile's Most Pure Heart of Mary parish, remained unconvinced that Toolen had experienced a conversion to racial justice. The priest of Mobile's largest African-American parish wrote Toolen that "Your letter on the death of Martin Luther King irked me. I could almost vomit at the hypocrisy in it. I am looking for leadership from you and not a letter filled with nice sounding but empty and deceiving words!" Sadlier then questioned whether Toolen was seriously interested in evangelism among Negroes in the diocese and doubted whether "you have the guts to condemn the cancer of racism and the sick political structure in your Diocese."²¹ Sadlier's rebuke did more than challenge the strength of Toolen's convictions. The priest ignored the bishop's episcopal authority and asserted in its place the primacy of Sadlier's own conscience. Sadlier's disrespect for the local ordinary prompted Toolen to complain to the Josephite provincial, Very Rev. George F. O'Dea. A few years earlier Toolen's petition probably would have brought reassignment for Sadlier--or at least some sort of official reproach.²² But in 1968, O'Dea refused Toolen's transfer request. The priest's removal, O'Dea argued, would only appear as if he were being punished for his civil rights activism. Toolen reluctantly agreed that such an appearance would damage the Church's image.²³

²¹ Letter from Rev. Richard T. Sadlier, S.S.J., Mobile to Toolen, April 6, 1968. Toolen papers.

²² In 1965 Toolen managed to have Rev. Maurice Ouellette, S.S.E., reassigned, following Ouellette's alleged participation in the Selma demonstrations contrary to Toolen's direct order. Ouellette denied participating, but left no doubt that he sympathized with the demonstrations. See, "Selma, Ala. Pastor Loses His Parish," *The Catholic Week*, July 1, 1965, p. 3; and From Toolen to Daniel Morgan, Huntsville, January 26, 1966. Toolen papers.

²³ Letter from Toolen to Very Rev. George F. O'Dea, S.S.J., Baltimore, MD, May 3, 1969; Toolen to O'Dea, May 26, 1969; O'Dea to Toolen, June 6, 1969; Toolen to O'Dea, June 24, 1969. Toolen papers.

By 1968 Sadlier's parish had become--much to Toolen's consternation--the center of racial activism in Mobile. Staffed by a religious order and not secular priests, Most Pure Heart of Mary had educated several generations of black Mobilians. The product of a segregated institution built to evangelize African Americans, Most Pure Heart of Mary nurtured the pride of the black community and prepared many for the city's racial confrontation in the late 1960s. In April 1968, a tenth-grade student at Most Pure Heart of Mary, Alphonse Allen, wrote a lengthy letter to the editor of *The Catholic Week* offering the "'other' side of the race situation." In what amounted to a racial call-to-arms and defense of black pride, Allen urged blacks to organize and "recognize the beauty in their black skin and nappy hair." "The white man" had subordinated blacks, Allen argued, and forced them to adopt white culture. And, according to Allen, the Catholic Church was complicit in that subordination. The Catholic Church in Alabama failed to desegregate its schools until fifteen years after the *Brown* decision, the student claimed. His dates may have been inaccurate (the actual time span was ten years), but he intended his hyperbolic rhetoric to inflame. Allen ignored what the priests and nuns of his own parish had accomplished for African Americans and charged that the "Catholic Church in Alabama is meaningless," full of racists and without adequate leadership. Archbishop Toolen, Allen claimed, "never once . . . told his people that they cannot be honest Christians and segregationists at the same time. Nor can they support a segregationist." "The time is NOW!" Allen urged, for blacks to take whatever actions necessary--violent or not--to fulfill "our moral duty."²⁴

²⁴ "Teenager Speaks On Race Situation," *The Catholic Week*, April 19, 1968, p. 7.

An editor's note appended to the letter called Allen's manifesto a "call to black racism, that can be degraded into a pattern every bit as ugly as extreme white racism." The editor then questioned Allen's own Christian commitment. The violence--both arson and the willingness to die for the cause--that Allen encouraged, moreover, "indeed is a far cry from the attitude of Martin Luther King, whose death is thereby left a waste."²⁵ Two weeks later Allen responded to the editor and claimed that his essay was a "summons to black pride" rather than black racism. Allen then rebuked other white Catholic high school students. Whenever Most Pure Heart of Mary participated with white Catholic high schools in the diocese, "we are very openly sneered at. Where is their 'Christian emphasis'?" All that Toolen had offered, moreover, were "statements and laws." These were not enough for Allen. "Now, I want action for these statements and laws."²⁶

At any other time, Alphonse Allen's call for action could probably be dismissed as little more than overzealous, youthful overreaching. But by 1968 pickets and demonstrations that had characterized the civil rights movement for the entire decade took on a greater sense of urgency. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, in a sense, had granted civil rights advocates what they had sought--equality before the law and in public accommodations. But as many learned very quickly, an end to de jure discrimination did not always mean an end to de facto

²⁵ Editor's note, "Teenager Speaks On Race Situation," *The Catholic Week*, April 19, 1968, p. 7.

²⁶ "Mobile Negro Student Denies His Article Backed Black Racism," *The Catholic Week*, May 3, 1968, p. 7.

segregation--nor did it mean an increase in economic opportunities for minorities.²⁷ In the late 1960s, civil rights organizations became more militant and increased their efforts to achieve both racial and economic justice. Catholics in Mobile openly supported those efforts in south Alabama.

During the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march, Archbishop Toolen had denounced priests and nuns who came to Alabama from other states and forbade those in his diocese from participating. In 1968 he changed his mind. The archbishop recognized that the previous diocesan restriction was "unrealistic and hence it is to be changed." Now priests and nuns would be permitted to participate in public civil rights demonstrations, provided their participation "is just, legal, and in no way conducive to violence, by fomenting [*sic*] or condoning disrespect for law and order." Priests and female religious, furthermore, would participate only "on an 'individual' basis, and not in the name of the Church." Toolen noted that the new regulation did not excuse those who had demonstrated in the past without the bishop's permission. But he allowed that "there has never been more need for honest, productive affirmation of the fact of human brotherhood" that participation in legal civil rights demonstrations would bring.²⁸

Toolen's announcement more than likely came out of expedience rather than any other reason. With the blessing of Vatican II reforms, clergy and female religious in his diocese had already begun to follow the dictates of their conscience. The change

²⁷ For the argument that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 actually marked an increase in African-American activism rather than the apex of the movement, see Minchin, "Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry"; and *idem*, *Hiring the Black Worker*.

²⁸ "Individual Rights Of Priests, Religious To Public Protest Backed By Archbishop," *The Catholic Week*, May 24, 1968, p. 1; Toolen reiterated the diocesan rules a year later, "Archbishop Reiterates Regulations," *The Catholic Week*, May 9, 1969, p. 1.

in diocesan regulations reflected the archbishop's attempt to reclaim his authority and keep civil rights demonstrations within proper boundaries. But Mobile's demonstrations and marches left the aging prelate frustrated and out of touch with his priests and sisters. In May 1968 Toolen wrote a California nun that "Things here are much messed up, particularly Toolen High School. They are all wild on the Negro question, and that comes before class, or anything else. I have only been out there once this year, but I do know what is going on and I don't like it."²⁹

Available printed sources do not reveal what exactly was happening at Mobile's Bishop Toolen High, but nuns across the city had begun to show increasing social concern about racial and economic justice in the city. The details are sketchy, but, according to one activist priest, Rev. Coman Dalton, nuns in Mobile had created an Institute for Human Understanding. In addition, sisters had established programs at Little Flower and Holy Family parishes "aimed primarily at creating an atmosphere and plans capable of promoting just and stable race relations in the city." These programs, according to Dalton, provided opportunities for "black and white, Catholic and Protestant, layman and clergyman [to] engage in and endure honest, creative and sometimes painful discussion."³⁰ In May 1968, furthermore, priests and nuns were among some four hundred marchers in downtown Mobile who complained about city hiring practices.³¹ In January 1969 the archbishop grumbled about the sisters at Bishop Toolen High who were "still much messed up with the Negro question." Toolen

²⁹ From Toolen to Sister Robert Ann, Loretta Court, Santa Clara, CA, May 16, 1968. Toolen papers.

³⁰ "Mobile Priest Commends Local Activities Of Sisters," *The Catholic Week*, May 10, 1968, p. 7.

³¹ "Sidewalk March Held To Protest Hiring Policies," *Mobile Register*, May 16, 1968, pp. 1, 6A.

revealed his continuing reluctance to force desegregation. Some of the nuns, he claimed, had arranged "a number of meetings on Human Relations, which means they are trying to push the Negro down the throat of the white people of Mobile." Similar meetings the year before had failed to attract much attention, Toolen wrote. He received an invitation for the 1969 meetings, "but threw it in the waste paper basket."³²

In 1968 and 1969, priests and nuns proved that they were willing to go to jail for their part in demonstrations. And Toolen was not the only white Mobilian impatient with such 'radical' civil rights participation. An organization known as Catholic Laymen for Responsible Action designated itself spokespeople for white opponents to demonstrations. That group claimed that Catholics who demonstrated did so "as individuals" and did not represent the beliefs of all their fellow churchpeople.³³ In June 1964, John Sporna, a white layman from Vinegar Bend, Alabama, wrote Msgr. Lipscomb, the chancellor of the diocese, that "Underhanded community influence is working its way there under a cloak of innocence." Sporna informed Lipscomb that he would "appreciate if the bishop would advise the nuns and clergy to knock it off." Referring to Jesus' admonition in the Gospels, Sporna noted that the "poor we will always have with us, and there is nothing happening to them there. They fare much better than poor white people, who do not march or complain."³⁴

³² From Toolen to Sister Mary Louise, Loretto Heights College, Denver, CO, January 18, 1969. Toolen papers.

³³ [1968] Statement signed by twenty-four Negro laymen in protest of the Catholic Laymen for Responsible Action. Toolen papers.

³⁴ From John Sporn, Vinegar Bend, AL. to Rev. Oscar H. Lipscomb, Chancellor, Mobile, June 14, 1968. Toolen papers.

In 1969 the number and intensity of racial and economic justice demonstrations increased behind the organizational thrust of Neighborhood Organized Workers (NOW). NOW formed in Mobile in 1968 as a nonviolent, direct-action civil rights organization whose purpose was to pressure the city's business and political communities to open up more employment opportunities for African Americans. NOW represented the combination of racial and class-based issues that characterized activism in the late 1960s. In an effort to increase black electoral participation, NOW also conducted voter registration drives and sponsored political fairs to give citizens an occasion to meet candidates. They met every Wednesday night in Most Pure Heart of Mary's school cafeteria.

Compared to other Alabama cities, Mobile had long enjoyed relatively peaceful race relations. In the 1950s and early 1960s, black leaders had cooperated with racially moderate (and Catholic) Mayor Joseph N. Langan to insure peaceful integration of lunch counters and public transportation. But, frustrated with the slow pace of racial reform in the city, NOW broke with Mobile's established middle-class blacks and demanded immediate improvements in employment and housing opportunities for the city's African-American population. This new generation of civil rights activists recognized that white-owned businesses reaped abundant profits from black consumers but refused to give them jobs. As a result, NOW sponsored carefully planned--and strategically targeted--boycotts and pickets of the Greater Gulf States Fair, beer and soft drink distributors, local grocery stores, downtown businesses, and the municipal auditorium in order to convince employers to hire African Americans. In July 1968 NOW brought to town Stokely Carmichael, whose "black power" message helped to

accelerate the nation's widening racial divide. The group earned its notoriety in 1969 with marches and demonstrations targeted at Mobile's Junior Miss Pageant, one of the city's annual opportunities to perform for a national audience.³⁵ NOW's presence in Mobile divided the city and the Catholic Church.

Clerical insubordination (from Toolen's perspective) and support for the NOW demonstrations could be located in both secular and religious order priests. Indeed, even Rev. Thomas Nunan, the director of the diocese's Catholic Charities who lived in the chancery with the archbishop, participated in the demonstrations and provoked angry reactions from lay Catholics. In January 1969, John T. Toenes, of Mobile, mailed a check to Catholic Charities to fulfill his 1968 pledge. In an accompanying letter to Nunan, Toenes expressed pleasure (sarcastic, to be sure) at being able to contribute to such "worthy causes" as "the purchase of gasoline and matches by some of your friends, in order to enforce the downtown boycott." Toenes claimed to believe in the importance of charity, but he charged that some members of the clergy "are stretching the meaning of 'charity' too far."³⁶ The archbishop obviously missed Toenes sarcasm. He assured the layman that "no money will go for oil or matches; we need it to [*sic*] badly for Catholic Charities."³⁷ James C. Antwerp, Jr. doubted that boycotts were compatible with Catholicism, "even after Vatican II." If they were, then a counter-

³⁵ Frederick Douglas Richardson, Jr., *The Genesis and Exodus of NOW*, 2d ed. (Boynton Beach, FL: Futura Printing, 1996).

³⁶ From John T. Toenes, Mobile to Rt. Rev. Thomas Nunan, Catholic Charities, Mobile, January 29, 1969. Toolen papers.

³⁷ From Toolen to Toenes, February 4, 1969. Toolen papers.

boycott of Catholic Charities would be acceptable. Instead, Antwerp argued, it would be better for Catholic Charities if Toolen removed Nunan from his post.³⁸

In March 1969, James V. Irby, III claimed to speak for other Catholic laymen when he complained that "It seems to me, to put it bluntly, my Church is publically [*sic*] aiding and supporting an organization that is responsible for acts of violence and civil disorder. I refer to NOW." In Irby's mind, NOW's boycotts and sponsorship of Stokely Carmichael's visit were serious threats to law and order. And the fact that they were allowed to hold their meetings at a Catholic church served as an "open endorsement" of their lawlessness. The relationship between the Church and the civil rights organization "coupled with the actions of many of the local clergy, is fast making me ashamed" of being a Catholic. Toolen cautioned the layman about condemning the entire Church for the actions of a few and assured him that the Church would never approve of "disorder and breaking the law."³⁹

In May 1969, in order to highlight employment inequality in local government, NOW disrupted the Junior Miss Pageant, held annually at downtown Mobile's Municipal Auditorium. NOW demanded that the auditorium acknowledge its dependence on the African-American community and hire a black assistant manager. Among the ninety-three arrested the first night of the beauty contest were two white priests and ten white nuns. Police arrested more than 150 the second night. Included in

³⁸ From James. C. Antwerp, Jr., Mobile, February 5, 1969. Toolen papers.

³⁹ From James V. Irby, III to Toolen, March 4, 1969; Toolen to Irby, March 10, 1969. Toolen papers.

that number were additional Catholic clergy and female religious. The third night of the pageant—and the third round of protests—brought seventy-one additional arrests.⁴⁰

Toolen later declared that Catholic participation in the Junior Miss demonstrations was contrary to diocesan regulations established in 1968, but the archbishop resigned himself to an inability to curtail Catholic activism. In a May 5, 1969, letter, Toolen grumbled that “All authority seems to have gone. They are forbidden to take part in these things, but the Bishop’s order means nothing.”⁴¹ Later he grouched to the apostolic delegate that “Most of our trouble is due to our young sisters and young priests who are agitators among the Negroes. . . . They have no respect for anybody’s authority, not even God’s.”⁴² He encouraged Mobile resident Glenn R. Sebastian to “keep up the fight and sooner or later, Holy Mother Church will come out on top.”⁴³

But Toolen’s version of “Holy Mother Church” was clearly under assault. The NOW demonstrations could not be separated from Catholic assistance. A Birmingham newspaper columnist reported that without the institutional support provided by Most Pure Heart of Mary parish and the assistance of “some 30 angry priests and nuns,” NOW could not have been successful. Indeed, black Protestant churches were reluctant

⁴⁰ “93 Are Arrested At Auditorium,” *Mobile Press*, May 2, 1969, pp. 1, 8; “Many In March Freed On Bonds,” *Mobile Press*, May 3, 1969, pp. 1, 2; “March Halted By Police; 151 Arrested,” *Mobile Register*, May 3, 1969, pp. 1, 6; “71 Arrested During Third Protest Try,” *Mobile Press-Register*, May 4, 1969, pp. 1, 14.

⁴¹ From Toolen to Mr. Glenn R. Sebastian, Mobile, May 5, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁴² From Toolen to Most Rev. Luigi Raimondi, Apostolic Delegate, Washington, D.C., June 17, 1969. See also, From Toolen to Sister M. Benedict, Guyana, South America, June 16, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁴³ From Toolen to Mr. Glenn R. Sebastian, Mobile, May 5, 1969. Toolen papers.

to support the militant organization. As a result, one nun claimed, "'NOW probably would never have gotten off the ground without us.'" ⁴⁴ Participating clergy and nuns later defended their activism--and their willingness to be arrested--by claiming "Christian commitment and concern" over wage inequity and poor living conditions for many of Mobile's African Americans. ⁴⁵ They believed that their personal consciences took precedent over Toolen's misguided opposition to direct action and preference for gradual reform.

One priest arrested during the Junior Miss demonstrations was Rev. L. Russell Biven, the director of the diocese's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Since he held such a prominent position in the diocesan bureaucracy, Biven's arrest contributed to the crisis of authority that plagued many white members of the Church. One mother of four, Mrs. Edward S. Allenbach, threatened to withdraw her four children from CCD classes at St. Mary's parish in Audrey, outside Mobile. As one chancery memo recounted Allenbach's complaint, "she felt that it was high time that something was done about these priests and sisters who hide behind the cloth. What they do on their own time is their own affair, but let it not be done in the garb of religion."⁴⁶

In addition to problems within the CCD program, the 1968 - 1969 academic year had been a trying one for the bishop. Many of the nuns who participated in NOW's demonstrations also taught in diocesan schools. And Toolen claimed that he and school superintendent Rt. Rev. J. Edwin Stuardi had considered closing the schools

⁴⁴ Wallace Henley, "Showdown for Catholics at Mobile?" *The Birmingham News*, May 18, 1969, p. A-12. Clipping in Toolen papers.

⁴⁵ "Priests, Sisters Give Explanation," *The Catholic Week*, May 16, 1969, p. 9.

rather than indulge socially conscious sisters. But, he reasoned, "this would hurt the parents and the children, and then too, we have so much money invested and we don't want these buildings idle."⁴⁷ Toolen clashed with the principal of Bishop Toolen High School, who claimed that "she had full authority from her Provincial to make all decisions and I had to remind her that the school was not hers, but ours, and she was there to teach and not run Negro parades." Toolen threatened that "they have got to either teach school or go some place else."⁴⁸ Under that type of pressure, the Sisters of Loretto at Toolen and McGill High Schools signed their new contracts.

Some parents probably would have been happier if Toolen had failed to convince the Loretto sisters to remain. In May 1969, Henry H. Green of Irvington, Alabama, informed Toolen of his plans to withdraw his children from parochial schools because priests and sisters "have been too much influenced by 'isms' of people like Stokely Carmichael." Archbishop Toolen's sympathy with Green's dilemma is striking. Under different circumstances, the archbishop might have reminded Green of his responsibility to be faithful to Catholic institutions. But instead of encouraging Green to leave his children in Catholic schools, Toolen acknowledged the problems and

⁴⁶ Memorandum for Msgr. Oscar H. Lipscomb, Chancellor, May 3, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁴⁷ From Toolen to Sister Ivan, St. Louis Convent, Monaghan, Ireland, June 9, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁴⁸ From Toolen to Sister Ramona Marie, Loretto Academy, El Paso, TX, June 9, 1969. See also, From Sister Teresa Vella, Principal, Bishop Toolen High School, Mobile to Rt. Rev. J. Edwin Stuardi, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Mobile, May 28, 1969; Minutes of Joint Meeting of McGill-Bishop Toolen High School faculties, May 26, 1969. Toolen papers.

essentially capitulated and blessed Green's decision. He urged Green only to make sure his children received proper religious instruction.⁴⁹

Following Toolen's public condemnation of the NOW demonstrations, 141 mostly Birmingham Catholics--priests, sisters, and laity--issued a statement supporting the activist priests and nuns. They wrote Toolen directly and also paid for a quarter-page advertisement in *The Catholic Week*. The statement expressed "in love, our understanding and acceptance of their motivation, their zeal for justice and truth and their willingness to be committed to these principles." These sympathetic Catholics were "convinced of and committed in conscience to the sincerity, genuineness, and courage of the Christian witness that the small number of priests and sisters of the Mobile deanery are giving in the name of the church."⁵⁰

Two Mobile women expressed their support to the editor of *The Catholic Week*. Diane E. Hampton wrote to "praise and thank the priests, sisters and lay people who realized the true mission of the Church and who were willing to stand and support protests against conditions which tear away man's dignity and shroud him in a cloak of bitterness." Lorraine C. Hampton shared a letter she had written to the pastor of her parish, St. Dominic's. Hampton evinced a post-conciliar spirit when she embraced the notion that the Church "is not a building, but is made up of people who are members of the Mystical Body of Christ." She praised her own pastor for his attempts to engender a Christian spirit in his parishioners, "in spite of the fact that members of the

⁴⁹ From Henry H. Green, Irvington, AL. to Toolen, May 18, 1969; Toolen to Green, May 26, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁵⁰ "To The Catholic Christians Of Diocese Of Mobile-Birmingham," *The Catholic Week*, May 16, 1969, p. 9; Henley, "Showdown for Catholics at Mobile?"

congregation have walked out of the church during homilies on the subject of brotherhood.” She then separated herself from those disgruntled communicants. Hampton feared that they represented the mainstream of Catholic thought, so she requested that her name be removed “as a tithing member from the roster of St. Dominic’s Parish.”⁵¹

Lorraine Hampton’s instincts were correct. Not all white laity were pleased with their pastors’ commitments to social justice. Coman Dalton was one of the priests who, in Toolen’s words, “has really gone wild on this Negro question and will listen to no-one.” As one of the group of activist priests, he tried to explain his arrest to his parishioners during one Sunday mass. Some of his parishioners refused to listen. According to Toolen, “a woman in the church got up and told him she came to hear Mass and not to hear why he was arrested, and she and many others left the church.”⁵² Fr. Russell Biven met similar resistance when he attempted to explain his involvement during mass at the Cathedral.⁵³

In July 1969 several hundred Mobile Catholics petitioned Toolen to cut off NOW’s Catholic support. The signatories protested NOW’s use of Catholic property and demanded that Toolen order an end to Church assistance of the civil rights organization. “The people in this organization,” the petition claimed, “do not support the church in any way nor can their evil activities be construed in any way to be

⁵¹ “Reactions to Mobile Situation,” *The Catholic Week*, May 16, 1969, p. 9.

⁵² From Toolen to Sister Evangelist, Convent of Mercy, County Meath, Ireland, June 12, 1969; From Toolen to Miss Sal Devaney, Boyle, Roscommon, Ireland, June 7, 1969; From Toolen to Rev. Edward J. Hanrahan, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., June 9, 1969. Toolen papers.

⁵³ Henley, “Showdown for Catholics at Mobile?”

beneficial to a progressive Mobile.” These anti-demonstrators supported the archbishop’s “open criticism of these priests and nuns and offer you our warmest congratulations and highest praise.” But they also implicitly critiqued Toolen’s 1968 relaxation of the diocesan ban on demonstrating. “We also wish to state that we totally disagree with this business of priests, nuns and other members of the clergy participating in these marches regardless of whether the people involved have a permit or not.” The original petition contained over three hundred signatures (with some of those being “Mr. and Mrs.”), and a September 4 addendum listed additional supporters. Toolen acknowledged the written protest. “The contents are useful to me not only as an expression of sentiment but also as an index as to the feelings of a large part of our Catholic community.”⁵⁴

These incidences illustrate the crisis of authority created for southern Catholics and Archbishop Toolen as a result of Vatican II and the civil rights movement. Most southern Protestant pastors served at the whim of their congregation. Priests served at the discretion of their local bishop. Laity who found themselves at odds with their priests had little recourse but their bishop. If the prelate refused to remove or reassign recalcitrant priests, then the laity were stuck with disagreeable leadership. And at eighty-three already past standard retirement age and well out of touch with the Church mainstream, Toolen proved reluctant to discipline his priests. Circumstances would not improve for white Catholics upset with the pace of racial and religious reform. Toolen retired in December 1969 and was replaced by John L. May, formerly auxiliary bishop

⁵⁴ From James E. Rice, St. Pius X Parish, Mobile to Toolen, July 13, 1969; Petition To Most Reverend Thomas J. Toolen, Bishop Mobile-Birmingham Diocese; From Rice to Toolen, September 4, 1969; From Toolen to Rice, September 5, 1969. Toolen papers.

of the Archdiocese of Chicago. A member of a younger generation and evincing more liberal sympathies, May reinforced the Alabama Church's support for racial and social justice and its commitment to implementation of conciliar reforms.

Atlanta was equally as vulnerable to racial unrest in the late 1960s as Mobile, but the reaction of the Catholic Church differed in Georgia. Under Hallinan and his successor Thomas A. Donnellan, the church had established its civil rights credentials and promoted racial justice. In 1970 Donnellan reaffirmed the archdiocese's commitment to school integration. In a scheme to avoid public school integration, some area whites tried to enroll their children in parochial schools. Hallinan had integrated Atlanta archdiocesan schools, to be sure, but the population of African-American Catholics in the city remained small and that minority was not widely dispersed. Donnellan refused to allow new students to be admitted to archdiocesan schools for the remainder of the year, except for the children of parents who had relocated to a new parish. He announced that admission in the next academic year would be according to regular archdiocesan policy--i.e. open admission, with Catholics within a parish receiving first priority, then other Catholics, followed by all other children, "regardless of race or creed." "Our schools," Donnellan announced, "will always be opened to those who sincerely seek the religiously oriented education that the schools can provide." "Our racial policy will always be the same," the archbishop continued, "to use our schools and our entire educational program to foster racial integration, and understanding and harmony between men of all races and creeds."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Statement of Most Reverend Thomas A. Donnellan, Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, Press Release, January 11, 1970. Box 036/6, Folder 52, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

It would be naïve to assume that Donnellan and Mobile's Bishop John May succeeded in moving all of their parishioners toward sympathy with civil rights. But within their respective dioceses, both Donnellan and May were the ultimate arbiters of integration and both confronted dissent with the moral authority of Roman Catholic doctrine. Moreover, by 1970 complaints about racial issues declined and the crisis of authority that plagued the Church in the late 1960s shifted to gender issues and disagreement over the Church's ban on artificial birth control. Both the Archdiocese of Atlanta and the Diocese of Mobile successfully institutionalized social concern and directed resources toward alleviating economic and social inequities that often aggravated racial discrimination.

There remained racial problems still to resolve, to be sure. Despite Toolen's claims to the contrary, school integration did not immediately follow his 1964 edict. Geographical location most often determined which parish elementary school a student attended; therefore, widespread integration at that level simply did not occur right away. And diocesan high schools were slow to admit racially mixed student bodies. For a couple of years after his pastoral edict, Toolen reported that "All our schools are now integrated," referring to official diocesan policy and not reality.⁵⁶ Toolen explained in 1967 that, despite being welcome in any diocesan school, few Negroes had applied for admission. "They would rather be with their own and the Negro people all know that

⁵⁶ Letter from Toolen to Very Rev. Gerard B. Fredericks, Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, Silver Spring, MD, May 29, 1965; and Toolen to Most Rev. Cletus F. O'Donnell, J.C.D., American Board of Catholic Missions, Madison, WI, June 20, 1967. Toolen papers.

Pure Heart of Mary, because of the sisters, is an excellent school.”⁵⁷ Diocesan officials initiated integration efforts by pairing white schools with blacks ones and slowly consolidating them. But as late as 1970, both Montgomery and Selma, for instance, still contained two racially separated schools.⁵⁸ Indeed, in a 1970 report Bishop John L. May acknowledged that “very little has been done” to overcome geographical boundaries to integration. Nevertheless, he noted, “Almost all schools have some black students. One school has an equal number.” And two formerly black high schools had closed and those students attended other diocesan high schools.⁵⁹

Despite the 1954 *Brown* decision, southern states effectively delayed integration in public schools until the early 1970s. In Mobile, for example, supporters of desegregation finally won their court battles in 1971, and the school system began the court-ordered plan of redesignating schools, implementing new programs, and busing students across the city.⁶⁰ The pattern in Mobile and the rest of the South was for private academies to attract white students fleeing desegregation in public schools. For some Alabama parents, Catholic schools promised safe—i.e. segregated—haven for their

⁵⁷ Letter from Toolen to Sister Mary Benedicta, O.P., St. Clara's Convent, Sinsinawa, WI, April 25, 1967. Toolen papers.

⁵⁸ Letter from Edward A. Leary, S.S.E., Selma to Toolen, May 21, 1969; From Msgr. J. Edwin Stuardi, Superintendent of Schools to Toolen, June 7, 1969; Pastoral letter from Bishop John May to priests of the diocese, n.d. [1970], “Comments on the Senate Minutes of Oct. 14”; Letter from Father John Crowley, S.S.E., Edmundite Mission Director, Selma to Bishop May, March 4, 1970; Meeting with Bishop John L. May Concerning the Future of Catholic Secondary Education in the Montgomery Area, November 9, 1970. Toolen and John L. May papers, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Mobile, AL.

⁵⁹ From Mr. Frank O'Neill, Southern Regional Council, Atlanta to Lipscomb, Chancellor, February 27, 1970; From Lipscomb to O'Neill, March 16, 1970. May papers.

⁶⁰ Albert S. Foley, “Mobile, Alabama: The Demise of State Sanctioned Resistance,” in *Community Politics and Educational Change: Ten School Systems under Court Order*, eds. Charles V. Willie and Susan L. Greenblatt (New York: Longman, 1981).

children. In 1970, however, Bishop May refused to admit those transfer students into parochial schools. "We will not allow our schools to be a refuge for anyone trying to avoid integration in the public schools," May pledged. In a delicious bit of irony, those parents now trying to send their children to diocesan schools, were non-Catholics or, according to May, "Catholics who removed their kids from our schools when we started to integrate."⁶¹ By 1972 eighteen of twenty-nine diocesan elementary schools and all four high schools were integrated.⁶²

When public schools did finally integrate, some white parents often favored integrated parochial schools over public ones. In 1971, for example, when Huntsville integrated its public schools, parents of fifteen white students tried to use St. Joseph's parish elementary school to escape having to send their children to a previously all-black school. In July 1971, Calvary Hill, the formerly segregated public school, had been ordered to admit 30 percent white students for the upcoming school year. St. Joseph's school was 60 percent white. Birmingham diocesan policy required integration and refused admission to white children who were merely trying to escape public school desegregation. An Alabama circuit court ruled that St. Joseph's must accept the students, but in February 1972 the state supreme court overturned the lower court ruling. Birmingham Bishop Joseph G. Vath praised the decision and pledged that

⁶¹ "Bishop May Praises Supreme Court Ruling," *The Catholic Week*, April 30, 1971, p. 1; "Catholic Schools Today," part of annual report, *Teaching Christ: The Educational Mission of the Church*, supplement in *The Catholic Week*, May 26, 1972, p. 3-B.

⁶² "Catholic Schools Today," p. 3-B.

"in Christian charity . . . the good of these children must be considered." The fifteen white students, therefore, would be allowed to finish the semester at St. Joseph's.⁶³

Parochial school integration and sisters' activism remained a point of contention for some white parents. In 1970 one white Mobile parent, Patricia A. Guidry, complained to Bishop May and the PTA president of St. Mary's parish about one nun whose sympathy with civil rights--in Guidry's mind--overshadowed her classroom responsibilities. Sister Carolyn taught middle-school social studies, "but from some of her remarks she teaches only Social Justice." As far as Guidry was concerned, Sister Carolyn showed little regard for parental authority. The disgruntled mother protested that the nun "is teaching the children to love their black brothers and if she gets parental objection she will go so far as to tell the children their parents are wrong and she is right." Guidry wondered why Catholic parents should pay parochial school tuition "to have a 'way-out' Sister or Priest teach our children that we parents are wrong." These clergy and sisters, to Guidry's horror, even cared little about the potential dangers of interracial marriage. Guidry's letter demonstrates that some white Catholics--or at least this one Mobile woman--still were uncomfortable with the changes of Vatican II and that they conflated those changes with changes in race relations in the South.⁶⁴

Guidry's displeasure with St. Mary's nuns notwithstanding, hostilities appear to have gone underground, if they did not disappear altogether. At least, those white Catholics uncomfortable with racial progress no longer went to the bishop with their

⁶³ "Court Approves Refusals," *The Catholic Week*, February 4, 1972, pp. 1, 12.

⁶⁴ From Patricia A. Guidry, Mobile to William Finnem, President, St. Mary's P.T.A., Mobile, September 25, 1970. May offered a rather noncommittal response. See From May to Guidry, September 29, 1970. May papers.

complaints as they had with Toolen. Given the positions of the Church at large on racial justice and the policies of the new bishop of Mobile, perhaps most Catholics saw such protest as futile. Both dioceses, nevertheless, were left with even more difficult tasks than defending their racial justice stances. The late 1960s and early 1970s brought additional opportunities to practice integration by combining black and white parishes and consolidating Church resources. Forcing an end to *de facto* segregation taxed the bishops' leadership skills and tested long-standing commitments to individual parishes.

The process of integrating parishes by consolidating black and white churches in the same geographic area began as early as 1968 in Alabama. In Auburn that year, a priest and two laypeople requested that Toolen close a Negro mission and fold the responsibilities for the African-American apostolate there into the white parish, St. Michael's Church.⁶⁵ The laypeople, a husband and wife who were members of St. Michael's, criticized the "institutionalized racial separation" and "spiritual and physical isolation" created by separate parishes.⁶⁶ Toolen complied with the requests and St. Michael's parish assumed responsibility for St. Martin's mission in Auburn. This process did not always occur easily, especially when parish territorial boundaries overlapped and individual churches often resisted relinquishing their autonomy. In Atlanta, for example, the decision to combine St. Paul of the Cross and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes required, according to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, a "review of existing territorial boundaries . . . to achieve a more equitable distribution of parish

⁶⁵ From Rev. Joseph F. Konen, C.M., Auburn, AL. to Toolen, May 3, 1968; Very Rev. Oscar H. Lipscomb, Chancellor to Konen, June 7, 1968. See also From Toolen to Sister Thomas Veronica, Spaulding College, Louisville, KY, October 16, 1968. Toolen papers.

responsibilities, financial resources, parochial education, etc.” More important than those considerations, moreover, was “our attitude and our practices toward our Christian brothers.”⁶⁷ The two parishes remained separate institutions as late as 1997.⁶⁸

Even when two parishes consolidated, the process often took several years. Indeed, Mobile’s first successful merger occurred in December 1970, but had begun over two years earlier. In 1968 the parish council of Mobile’s predominantly black St. Peter Claver parish recommended that Peter Claver and St. Vincent de Paul parishes be combined. But diocesan officials shelved integration plans when they could not work out an acceptable arrangement. In October 1970, Bishop May ruminated on the difficulties inherent in parish mergers and revealed that Peter Claver parishioners had changed their minds about merging with St. Vincent de Paul. “My communication with the people of St. Peter Claver would indicate no desire for suppression of their parish and certainly not of their school in favor of the proposed all-purpose Catholic center to care for the poor in the Texas Street area.” May speculated that perhaps the plan had not been explained to them adequately.⁶⁹

At some point, however, someone convinced the two churches that consolidation was in the best interest of the Church and the neighborhood. In

⁶⁶ From Mr. and Mrs. Gerald V. Flannery, Auburn to Parish Council Members, St. Michael’s Church, Auburn, AL, March 27, 1968. Toolen papers.

⁶⁷ From Michael A. Doyle, Secretary, Archdiocesan Pastoral Council to Donnellan, May 19, 1970, Box 008/6, Folder 2; and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, June 10, 1970, Box 008/6, Folder 3, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

⁶⁸ *The Official Catholic Directory* (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1997).

⁶⁹ St. Peter Claver Parish Council, October 15, 1968; May, “Comments on the Senate Minutes of October 14,” [1970], Toolen and May papers; “Two Mobile Churches Unite,” *The Catholic Week*, February 5, 1971, p. 11.

November 1970, Bishop May announced the merger of Sts. Peter Claver and Vincent de Paul parishes and instructed representatives from both churches "to prepare the most creative and effective program to involve the Church in the rebirth of this new community." The new parish retained St. Vincent's church building and Peter Claver's school and convent, and two priests (one from each church) became co-pastors. The new parish voted to take the name Prince of Peace, over the objections of some of the members of St. Vincent de Paul. The first service for the new Prince of Peace parish was the 1970 Christmas midnight mass, which some five hundred worshippers attended. *The Catholic Week* expressed a great deal of hope for the precedent-setting church. "A real community is not established over night. Time is required to weld bonds. Prince of Peace Parish, however, has a headstart in this direction because the people in this community share much in common." Although the old parishioners had worshipped in different churches, they called the same neighborhoods home and "shared a common geographic background with resultant common interests and concerns."⁷⁰

The diocese's next experiment came in Selma, the civil rights battleground that had divided the Church--and the nation--in 1965. In 1970 the diocese merged the schools of Assumption (white) and St. Elizabeth (black), as a prelude to parish consolidation a year later. In July 1971 the two Selma parishes became Our Lady Queen of Peace. The consolidation tested the Catholic population's and the diocese's commitments to racial integration. In October 1970 Bishop May declared that the "Selma school merger attempt has been nearly a total failure as far as racial integration

⁷⁰ "Two Mobile Churches Unite," *The Catholic Week*, February 5, 1971, p. 11.

is concerned.”⁷¹ During the 1971 – 1972 academic year, school enrollment was 80 percent African American, out of a total population that had decreased from 169 white children alone prior to the merger to 105 of both races in 1972. Services alternated between the two church buildings, all lay organizations united to create single parish groups, and membership on the parish council was divided evenly between whites and blacks. Father N. B. Ziter, the Edmundite pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace, explained the rationale for the merger in both theological and pragmatic terms. Racial segregation was no longer commonly accepted in the Church and could not justify separate facilities. “The Catholic concept of church was injured by two separate churches. Also there were not enough Catholics to justify the number of priests and nuns serving the Selma area.”⁷²

Opposition to mergers often came from black parishes instead of from whites and was not always based on reasons of racial prejudice. In 1970, for instance, the Shrine of the Holy Cross in Daphne, Alabama—a predominantly black parish with more than four hundred members in 1970--voted, “with only one exception, to keep it open.”⁷³ And in 1993 a Tuscaloosa priest recalled that African Americans had resisted combining with a white parish there because separate facilities gave blacks autonomy that they did not enjoy in an integrated church. “Probably [parish consolidation] was immature because in their own parish of St. Mary Magdalene they were ‘top dog’ so to speak. They ran the whole parish.” Whites accepted African Americans into their

⁷¹ May, “Comments on the Senate Minutes of October 14,” [1970]. Toolen papers.

⁷² “Combined Selma Parishes – A Look Into The Future?” *The Catholic Week*, March 24, 1972, pp. 1, 14.

⁷³ Minutes of the Baldwin County Priests’ Association Meeting, May 21, 1970. May papers.

parish, but blacks “just didn’t have the influence that they had had in their own church and so on so, many Black people were lost through that period to the church.”⁷⁴

In 1970 the South was nearly as divided over race as it had been before the civil rights movement began. The federal government had outlawed segregation in schools and in public institutions, but the civil rights struggle was far from over. Many public school systems did not achieve integration until the 1970s, and African Americans still faced arduous legal fights in order to benefit from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Indeed, the 1964 congressional legislation that criminalized discrimination in public accommodations proved to be only the beginning of the struggle for equal opportunities. But that battle moved from sidewalks and streets to courtrooms and the federal bureaucracy.⁷⁵ The South may have managed to postpone radical reform, but the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia was not the same institution it had been before the civil rights movement began. Indeed, in 1970 Bishop May claimed that the Diocese of Mobile’s record in race relations surpassed that of his native Chicago. He wrote to an Urbana, Illinois, nun that “in our Catholic schools I see a much more constructive situation here than I saw in most cases in Chicago. Almost all our schools are integrated and there has been little difficulty. The same is true of the other institutions of the Diocese for the most part.” Problems persisted, however, “especially

⁷⁴ Transcription of oral history interview with Fr. Michael White, by Sr. Rose Sevenich, O.S.F, February 9, 1993. Transcribed by Mr. John J. P. O’Brien. Oral History Project, Box 2, Envelope 18, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

⁷⁵ Minchin, “Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry”; and idem, *Hiring the Black Worker*.

in housing.” But the white community recognized its responsibilities, and “All in all, I believe there is real promise here. I hope we can do our part.”⁷⁶

By 1970 the Church had survived its crisis of authority and institutionalized social concern, with both the Diocese of Mobile and the Archdiocese of Atlanta at least developing plans to solve problems of economic injustice. Officials in both dioceses realized the economic component of segregation. Social justice activism, therefore, dovetailed with efforts to end racial discrimination. In Mobile, for example, Bishop May established a commission for social justice, which listed its first priority as a “challenge to conscience” regarding the nation’s racial crisis. “Haunted by the fact that racist attitudes have been and still are accepted as part of our church and national life, this Commission asks for a Christian response to the entire problem.” Among other things, the statement urged whites to address blacks with titles of respect (e.g. “Mr.” or “Mrs.”); called on individual Catholics to adopt in their own businesses the diocesan policy of awarding work contracts only to equal opportunity employers; and invited “all Catholic institutions . . . to find ways to make available to Black people better job opportunities and positions of responsibility.” The commission issued the statement—with twenty-eight names attached—“in a spirit of reconciliation with our brothers whom we have offended and alienated by past injustices and with a firm hope in the future that must find us living, and working and building together as one people under God.”⁷⁷

Some local Catholics charged that the commission’s membership did not adequately represent those groups already active in social justice areas in the

⁷⁶ From May to Sister Mary Anselm, Mercy Hospital, Urbana, IL, March 17, 1970. May papers.

⁷⁷ “Statement of Concern,” Social Justice Commission, Mobile, [1970]. May papers.

community. Some activists were conspicuously absent from the commission, omissions that led these critics to question the diocese's commitment to true reform. Sister Judith Ann Pinnell, R.S.M., a nun in Daphne, Alabama, feared the commission would become little more than "a discussion club" that would actually hinder the drive for social justice. Sister Judith questioned whether local blacks--those who would be served by the new diocesan organization--were familiar with its members.⁷⁸ Diane Hampton claimed that the commission "will be unable to function without the knowledge and strategy that only people working with the [poverty] communities can provide." Her suggestions of possible additions to the commission were active in a variety of causes, ranging from urban development to public health.⁷⁹

The commission's initial Statement of Concern elicited favorable response from other Mobilians. Joseph Lanaux Marston, Jr., wrote the bishop that Corpus Christi's parish council was in "unanimous agreement with all parts of the Statement." Marston pledged the parish council's unfailing cooperation "to implement all propositions contained in the Statement and to do whatever else is necessary, and within our power, to live in Christian love and unity with all our brothers in Christ." The white layman also claimed that the parish council and all parish organizations were "fully integrated with our Black brothers." The interracial group acted in "unity as one people, and we work together as a parish family, under the Fatherhood of God."⁸⁰ Ray and Ida Vrazel

⁷⁸ From Sr. Judith Ann Pinnell, R.S.M., Daphne, AL to May, March 3, 1970. May papers.

⁷⁹ From Diane E. Hampton, Mobile to May, March 2, 1970. May papers. Bishop May defended the composition of the commission on grounds of expedience. See his response to Pinnell (March 5, 1970) and Hampton (March 5, 1970).

⁸⁰ From Joseph Lanaux Marston, Jr., President Corpus Christi Parish Council, Mobile to May, June 23, 1970. May papers.

also praised the statement on behalf of the local Christian Family Movement but expressed fear that the statement's moral force suffered from a lack of sincere priestly interest in social justice issues. Sermons that reflected the statement's message "have been either, non-existent [*sic*] or inadequate." Members of CFM believed that "most people are followers" and the "hardened non-changer" needed to be taught "that this is a prerequisite of Christianity."⁸¹

In the South, poverty often accompanied segregation, and the primary concern of social justice commissions in Mobile and Atlanta remained racial discrimination and its concomitant economic ills. In 1971 Bishop May appealed for financial support of Catholic Charities because "the root of much of our poverty in southern Alabama is racial discrimination." Support of Catholic Charities promised to "balance the scales" and end discrimination.⁸² In Atlanta archdiocesan officials lobbied for open housing that did not relegate blacks to the poorest areas of the city. One 1972 report to the archdiocesan pastoral council noted that 45 percent of the city's population (most of whom were black) lived in 16 percent of the land available for residential development. Persistent segregation, moreover, restricted African American movement out of low-income environments. The council called for efforts to educate local priests and laity about the problems of open housing. It also encouraged the Georgia Real Estate Commission to enforce the state's laws against racial blockbusting.⁸³ The federal government had defined the legal parameters of open housing, but the council also

⁸¹ From Ray and Ida Vrazel, Mobile to May, July 10, 1970. May papers.

⁸² Bishop John L. May, For the Record, *The Catholic Week*, February 5, 1971, p. 4.

insisted that Christians “must take into consideration the moral factor.” Christian charity should lead to racial justice “with the realization that all men, women and children share the same human dignity.”⁸⁴

In the early 1970s, both dioceses also embraced social justice issues other than race. For instance, both supported the cause of organized labor and endorsed the goals of the United Farm Workers. In 1971 Atlanta’s Holy Cross Board of Directors encouraged the city’s Catholics to support the UFW by purchasing only lettuce that had been picked by the farm workers “whose employers recognize the human dignity of the individual.” The board also urged parishes to provide forums for representatives of the farm workers to explain the issues surrounding the labor dispute.⁸⁵ The Diocese of Mobile’s Social Justice Commission also endorsed the UFW in 1973. According to the commission, the farm dispute “goes to the heart of the principles of *Rerum Novarum* that workers have a national right to organize and bargain collectively in unions of their choice.” The commission called on Alabama’s Catholics to support the boycott of non-union grapes and lettuce and the federal extension of minimum wage standards to agricultural workers. It also requested that Catholics pressure the local and national

⁸³ “Open Housing in the Metro Atlanta Area,” Box 009/1, Folder 9, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

⁸⁴ “Open Housing Report,” March 12, 1971. Box 009/1, Folder 9. See also Noel C. Burtenshaw, Chancellor, “The Church and Housing,” an address to the Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, November 5, 1970. Box 020/5, Folder 2, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

⁸⁵ “A Call To All Christians (Passed by the Holy Cross Board of Directors),” March 15, 1971. Box 037/1, Folder 59, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Teamsters Union to allow the farm workers "to elect the union affiliation of their own choice."⁸⁶

This support for social justice activism resulted from the convergence of the civil rights movement and the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Those two events disrupted the southern status quo and challenged the episcopal authority of bishops and priests, even as it made this institutionalization of social concern possible. Both Alabama and Georgia wrestled with the implications of conciliar and racial reforms. As a result, the Church in the 1970s was a different institution than it had been in 1945. Priests like Francis Wade and bishops like Thomas J. Toolen had lost ground to more progressive forces, and bishops like Thomas Donnellan and John May recast the southern Church to be more compatible with a new era.

⁸⁶ "Social Justice Commission Endorses Efforts Of United Farm Workers," *The Catholic Week*, July 27, 1973, p. 7; and "Social Justice Commission Endorses Farm Workers," *The Catholic Week*, May 9, 1975, p. 2. For a local labor issue, see Rev. Anthony V. Zoghby, Our Lady of Fatima Church, Pritchard, AL., Letter to the Editor, *The Catholic Week*, June 28, 1968, p. 2.

CONCLUSION

MODERN CATHOLICS IN THE MODERN SOUTH

In the post-civil rights movement modern South, race was--at least on the surface--no longer a central issue. To be sure, forced busing and continuing legal battles over enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act meant that the region had not yet achieved a consensus on race relations. But it had become evident by the 1970s that those issues were not peculiarly southern. Indeed, race riots and forced busing from Los Angeles to Boston revealed that the South's struggle for the previous decade and a half had been the nation's struggle as well. If the centrality of race no longer separated the South from the rest of the nation, it continued to divide the region's Protestant churches--that is, if they confronted the issue at all. Indeed, as institutions unaffected by federal legislation, churches remained the last unapologetic bastions of racial segregation. Protestant churches located in inner cities either followed their white parishioners to the suburbs or stayed and suffered through declining memberships. Those congregations that stayed often disagreed over their obligations to their urban environments and the African-American populations that soon surrounded their churches. Few made inclusiveness an explicit goal, and even more opposed it with a racist passion unaffected by the black freedom struggle.¹

¹ See Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), pp. 517-529.

By the early 1970s, however, racial justice was not the primary concern for Catholics in Alabama and Georgia. The leadership of two relatively liberal bishops settled that for the Church in Alabama and Georgia. That is, the white laity may not have agreed that interracialism was an appropriate Catholic response to the South's changing racial and social environment. But the bishops gave them little choice within the church. The reforms of Vatican II encouraged a more activist faith and empowered Catholic liberals to seek out solutions to current social problems. For example, in a 1967 speech at the University of Dayton, Archbishop Hallinan outlined the relationship between the liturgy and Catholics' moral responsibility to building community. Hallinan echoed conciliar language when he described Catholic liturgy as "the public act of all God's People." He acknowledged that liturgical experimentation had created a rift between traditionalists and reformers. But he argued that the liturgy provided the "source of the Christian's active, fruitful, redeeming presence in the world." He claimed that conciliar reform had created new opportunities "to make more evident the nexus between Christ in the Eucharist and Christ in the Poor." Vatican II made no explicit connection between liturgical and social reforms, but Hallinan and other Catholic liberals argued for interaction between the two. Indeed, according to Hallinan's interpretation, the Council's liturgical reform addressed the problems of "mass-culture in which dehumanization follows closely upon depersonalization." Embracing a renewed liturgy, he maintained, would overcome modern fragmentation, restore a sense of community, and compel a sense of ethical responsibility for other people.²

² Paul J. Hallinan, "Community and Liturgy: The Interaction," Speech delivered October 23, 1967, at the

Hallinan argued that ecumenical activity with Protestants, Orthodox, and Jews strengthened the bonds of community. But he recognized that the emphasis on the relationship between liturgy and community was new for most Catholics. Nevertheless, Catholics' current social justice activism compensated for "our late arrival in the secular city." Now Catholics could boast of "our present-day absorption in poverty," racism, debates over the morality of war, crime and economic injustices, "and our growing awareness of world problems and involvement in them" as evidence of "the willingness of our people to be concerned, to dare to be different."³ If Hallinan truly believed that all Catholics in Georgia--let alone in Alabama and the rest of the nation--adhered to this interpretation of Vatican II, he was surely mistaken. But his optimism reflected the modern Church in the modern South, a community orientation that was able to adapt to contemporary circumstances.

Indeed, if Catholics in Alabama and Georgia could "dare to be different" it was only because their circumstances in the South had dramatically changed. The pre-Vatican II Church was much like the pre-civil rights movement Protestant South--insular and exclusive. Catholics and Protestants co-existed on unsteady terms. Anti-Catholicism--and Catholics' own anti-Protestantism--revealed the antagonism with which each denomination viewed the other. Catholics in Alabama and Georgia critiqued modern southern society and often blamed Protestantism's disproportionate influence for the secularization. In their Christ the King celebrations and public

University of Dayton. Box 001/6, Folder 46, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA. For Alabama, see The Commission on the Liturgy, Diocese of Mobile, General Meeting #2, April 4, 1970. May papers. On the relationship between liturgical and social reforms, see Kelleher, "Liturgy and Social Transformation: Exploring the Relationship."

devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholics in Alabama asserted their right to belong--but on their own terms. They argued that Catholicism provided a more suitable alternative to return America--and the South--to its lost Christian greatness. The rhetorical patriotism and claims that Protestants had failed to stem the tide of materialism and secularization revealed a Church still at odds with mainstream southern society. Their marginal status prevented the development of a social ethic that would have challenged the prevailing southern racial status quo. They feared that their public presence was under intense scrutiny and any false move would jeopardize the progress they had made toward general acceptance.

This is not to suggest that most white Catholic laypeople sought an end to segregation or favored civil rights activism. But, unlike most of the Protestant South, there was a small level of integration within the Catholic Church. The Church in Alabama and Georgia reached out to African Americans and sought to incorporate them into the fold. Most had their own churches and schools, and where local parishes were biracial, seating and reception of communion often followed strictly segregated patterns. Father Foley's experience, however, revealed how unique truly integrated situations were and how marginalized those who advocated interracialism were. Outsiders, then, served as the moral conscience in racial justice matters. The late 1950s and early 1960s brought a gradual--and still minority--public realization that segregation and racism were moral issues. Nevertheless, however, some opposed Foley's anti-KKK campaign and his civil rights activism because they feared public reaction against them as Catholics. But the civil rights movement had propelled

³ Hallinan, "Community and Liturgy."

Catholics in Alabama and Georgia to center stage. Catholic advocates of racial justice moved comfortably within the civil rights mainstream. Gradualists and outright opponents of civil rights were equally comfortable in mainstream white society.

The 1960s brought divergent paths for the Catholic Church in Alabama and Georgia. In Alabama, Archbishop Toolen was at least a gradualist and proved only moderately supportive of 1960s racial justice goals. Blinded by his own racism and concern over the Church's acceptance by mainstream white society, however, he feared demonstrations and the ways they upset the status quo. Many of his white parishioners agreed with the archbishop on that score. Toolen's initial crisis of authority came with Selma in 1965. He retained control over his own priests and nuns (i.e. kept them from participating); but he could not control those who came from outside the diocese. His episcopal authority had been supplanted by the moral imperatives of the civil rights movement and the Vatican Council. The church as the "people of God" proved more morally and ethically compelling than appeals to preconciliar orthodoxy. By the late 1960s, Toolen lost the authority over his own priests and nuns as well.

The Archdiocese of Atlanta was more progressive in issues of racial justice. Leadership in civil rights came directly from the hierarchy and prominent lay leaders. Archbishop Hallinan and the archdiocese's white lay leadership fit well with city boosters who sought to project a progressive image. Many of the laity were lawyers and business leaders who understood that peaceful race relations were essential for city growth. This is not to suggest that Catholic proponents of the civil rights movement in Georgia acted out of pragmatic concerns. Indeed, Archbishop Hallinan, Gerard Sherry, and the presidents of lay organizations all evinced sincere conviction that Catholic

doctrine should be applied to race relations. All the white laity were not happy, to be sure, but within the parameters of the archdiocese, those disgruntled with racial and liturgical reform became the outsiders.

Historians still debate the long-term impact of the Second Vatican Council, and both conservatives and liberals disagree over what the bishops in Rome decreed about the nature of the Church. In the late 1960s, dioceses nationwide experienced a crisis of authority that did not discriminate in its impact on liberal and conservative bishops. For many Catholics, personal conscience and individual interpretations of moral authority took precedent when episcopal authority differed from the desires of activists. In Alabama that crisis took the form of priests and nuns ignoring the demands of their bishop and pressing for immediate solutions to continuing racial and economic discrimination in Mobile. The Archdiocese of Atlanta escaped a similar crisis in the late 1960s--but only because Archbishop Hallinan had already confronted dissenters earlier in the decade when he decreed integration of all archdiocesan institutions. By 1970 the Church in both Alabama and Georgia began making the difficult decisions necessary to achieve integration within their diocese--combining parishes and consolidating parish boundaries.

The South of the early 1970s appeared more diverse, and the mainstream acceptance of the Catholic Church reflected that turnabout. Feeling less embattled, they had become, it would appear, the 'tolerable alien.' There even appeared to be room for the Catholic moderates and liberals who had been marginalized just a decade before. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council vindicated progressive Catholics like Foley and the Catholic Committee of the South by opening the doors for increased activism. Since

the 1960s, this liberalism has become more common--at least among American Catholic bishops. Indeed, the hierarchy absorbed many of the issues of social justice and human rights that activists of the left had embraced. Historian David J. O'Brien concluded, however, that the hierarchy's identification with a liberal Catholic agenda satisfied very few members of the laity. From the perspective of the Catholic left, bishops' reform agenda offered inadequate solutions to social problems. From the perspective of the right, in the words of O'Brien, "its social reform proposals seemed unnecessary and its religious stance seemed compromised by undue adaptation to secular culture."⁴

It is difficult to know for certain the nature of the relationship between bishops and laity in Alabama and Georgia in the 1970s, but evidence from earlier periods and for the national political scene suggests some possible conclusions. In the 1960s, white laity in Alabama and Georgia had opposed the integration of Catholic institutions and the Church's support for the black freedom struggle. There is little evidence that their hard line on liberal racial reform softened within the previous decade. By the late 1970s, moreover, southern whites in general continued their trend away from moderate Democratic candidates in favor of conservatives and Republicans. In 1976, for example, Jimmy Carter failed to garner a majority of the white southern vote; and he won his native Georgia only because of the support of black voters. In 1980, furthermore, southern whites voted for Ronald Reagan and the Moral Majority, while African-American voters comprised southern political liberalism. To some extent, northern ethnic Catholics--who had traditionally voted Democratic as well--also

⁴ David J. O'Brien, "What Happened to the Catholic Left?" in *What's Left? Liberal American Catholics*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 275.

supported the California conservative. The political paths of the white South and white Catholics, therefore, crossed in the 1970s. Ecumenical cooperation had expanded beyond race and encouraged social and political cooperation on issues of morality and religion.⁵

While this conservative realignment has roots in the South and in white opposition to racial reform, it now looks beyond regional identity. That is, by 1980 being southern became less important than being morally and doctrinally pure.⁶ The irony of the relationship between Catholics and secular southern society is that as Catholics gained cultural acceptance, their regional identity meant less than their support for the moral and social issues of Fundamentalism. The more Catholic they became, therefore, the less their southern identity mattered.

⁵ On this ecumenical cooperation see Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*; and James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991).

⁶ Samuel S. Hill argues that the recent advent of Fundamentalism among southern Protestants (particularly Baptists and Presbyterians) has separated religious and regional identity. An emphasis on doctrinal purity instead of racial or cultural purity precludes the old "cultural captivity" of southern Protestantism. "Fundamentalism in Recent Southern Culture: Has it Done What the Civil Rights Movement Couldn't Do?" *Journal of Southern Religion* 1 (1998). But see Joel W. Martin's response in the same issue. Martin correctly points out that the success of the civil rights movement made possible the transformation that Hill describes. "All that is Solid (and Southern) Melts into Air: A Response to Sam Hill's Fundamental Argument Regarding Fundamentalism," *Journal of Southern Religion* 1 (1998). James C. Cobb argues, however, that southern identity persists and has merely changed shape and become more inclusive; it has not disappeared entirely. See the essays in *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

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